

penquin eggs

Issue No 12

Winter 2001

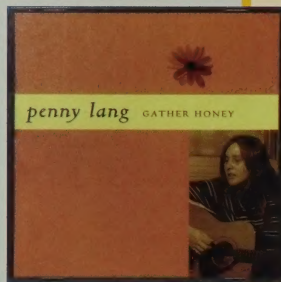


The Waifs

Tim Harrison
Long John Baldry
Greentrax Records
The Calgary Folk Club
Luther Wright & The Wrongs

La Bottine Souriante
Eileen McGann
Garnet Rogers
Gillian Welch
Maria Dunn

New from Borealis



Penny Lang Gather Honey

Penny's new album is a remarkable collection of recordings (both live and studio tracks) culled from 1963 through 1978.

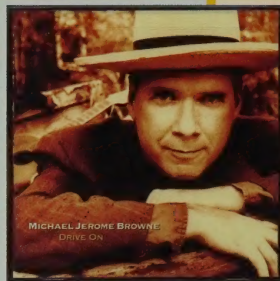
Gather Honey includes an array of songs by Canadian songwriters such as Chris Rawlings, Ronney Abramson and Bruce Murdoch and features a distinguished group of musicians, among them Ken Pearson, Roma Baran, Stephen Barry, John Reissner, Scot Lang and Don Audet.

Those who already know and love 'Lady Penny' will be moved to tears (by this album) and those who don't, will discover one of Montreal's secret treasures.

— *La Presse*

This is Penny singing her music for the nice folks. And the nice folks are delighted. You will be, too.

— *Jesse Winchester*



Michael Jerome Browne Drive On

Michael Jerome Browne delights us with his excursions into the heartland of American musical styles; swing, country, R & B and traditional blues.

Drive On covers all of these with instrumentation that ranges from a fretless gourd banjo to various guitars and fiddlers along with a band that includes the likes of Ray Bonneville, Jordan Officer and Jody Golick. Six original compositions plus inspired versions of songs by George Jones, Al Green, Sam Cooke and Stevie Wonder.

Michael Jerome Browne is a brilliant multi-instrumentalist and a marvelous interpreter of roots music traditions.

— *Real Blues Magazine*

borealis

Borealis Recording Company Ltd.

225 Sterling Road, Unit 19, Toronto, ON M6R 2B2 Canada

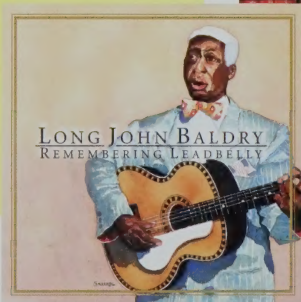
www.borealisrecords.com • info@borealisrecords.com

Toll-Free Order Line: 1-877-530-4288

New from Stony Plain

LONG JOHN BALDRY Remembering Leadbelly SPCD 1275

Opposites attract, and the supremely civil British-born singer Long John Baldry has long been fascinated by the life, songs, and recordings of Leadbelly, the larger-than-life convict, songwriter and singer who gave the world some of its greatest songs. Baldry gives Huddie Ledbetter's music a totally fresh interpretation, recalling not only the "hard man" of legend, but the pre-Beatles flavour of skiffle and the roots of today's "Brit-pop." Contains bonus interviews with Long John himself and with Alan Lomax, the man who discovered Leadbelly.



Also now available from Stony Plain

CHRIS THOMAS KING The Legend of Tommy Johnson

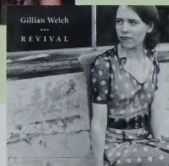
SPCD 1279



GILLIAN WELCH Time (Revelator)

SPCD 1278

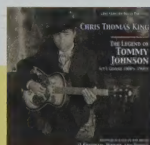
Just re-issued on Stony Plain



Revival
SPCD 1280



Hell Among the Yearlings
SPCD 1281



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www.stonyplainrecords.com

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penguin eggs

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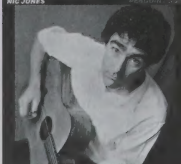
Penguin Eggs welcomes news, live reviews, features and photos but cannot accept responsibility for any unsolicited material. Please check with the editor prior to submitting any content. This magazine is published four times a year in summer (June), autumn (September), winter (December) and spring (March). Deadline is two weeks prior to going to press. For example, November 15 for December 1.

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NIC JONES



This magazine takes its name from Nic Jones' impossibly wonderful *Penguin Eggs* - a collection of mainly traditional British folk songs revitalized with extraordinary flair and ingenuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has grown into a source of inspiration for such young, gifted performers as Kate Rusby and Eliza Carthy.

Bob Dylan was so taken with Nic's powerful arrangements that he covered *Canados-i-o* virtually note for note on *Good As I Been To You*. Sadly though, Nic suffered horrific injuries in a car crash on his way home from a gig in the early hours of February, 26, 1982. He has never fully recovered nor performed since. His care and respect shown for the tradition and prudence to recognize the merits of innovation makes *Penguin Eggs* such an outrageously fine recording. This is the spirit this magazine will strive to reiterate.

Nic Jones' *Penguin Eggs* is available on Topic Records (TSCD-411) in Europe and on Shanachie Records (79090) throughout North America.

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Gillian Welch



Garnet Rogers



Charts

Megatunes Top 10

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Alisson Krauss
(Rounder) | New Favorite |
| 2. Ryan Adams
(Lost Highway) | Gold |
| 3. John Hammond
(Point Blank) | Wicked Grin |
| 4. Bob Dylan
(Sony) | Love And Theft |
| 5. Lucinda Williams
(Lost Highway) | Essence |
| 6. Various Artists
(Rykla) | Avalon Blues: A Tribute To Mississippi John Hurt |
| 7. Various Artists
(Lost Highway) | Timeless: A Tribute To Hank Williams |
| 8. David Gray
(RCA) | White Ladder |
| 9. John Hiatt
(Vanguard) | The Tiki Bar Is Open |
| 10. Various Artists
(Mercury) | O' Brother Where Art Thou |

Megatunes: 932 17th Ave., S.W. Calgary, Alberta.

Black Swan Top 15

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Various Artists
(Blood and Fire) | Darker Than Blue: Soul From Jamtown |
| 2. Leonard Cohen
(Sony) | Ten New Songs |
| 3. Various Artists
(Soul Jazz) | Studio One Roots |
| 4. Dan Bern
(Messenger) | New American Language |
| 5. Sons of Arqa
(Sound) | Jaggernaut Arqa |
| 6. Afro-Celt Sound System
(Real World) | Vol. 3: Further in Time |
| 7. Bob Dylan
(Sony) | Love and Theft |
| 8. Laio
(Peermusic) | Como Corre O Tempo |
| 9. Various Artists
(Soul Jazz) | Studio One Rockers |
| 10. Lenny Breau
(Guitararchives) | Pickin' Cotton |
| 11. Be Good Tanyas
(Nettwerk) | Blue Horse |
| 12. Riccardo Tesi
(Felmay) | Thapsos Dunya |
| 13. Matapat
(Borealis) | Petit Fou |
| 14. Harry Manx
(Northern Blues) | Dog my Cat |
| 15. Various Artists
(Select Cuts) | Select Cuts From Blood and Fire Vol. 2 |

Black Swan Records, 3209 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC V5K 2H5

Highlife Records Top 20

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Leonard Cohen
(Columbia) | Ten New Songs |
| 2. Various Artists
(Quango) | Mystic Groove |
| 3. Various Artists
(Blood and Fire) | Darker Than Blue: Soul from Jamdown |
| 4. Alpha Yaya Diallo
(Jeircho Beach Music) | The Journey |
| 5. Jah Wobble and Bill Laswell
(Palm Pictures) | Radioaxiom |
| 6. Boozoo Bajou
(Stereos Deluxe) | Satta |
| 7. Michael Franti and Spearhead
(Six Degrees) | Stay Human |
| 8. The Be Good Tanyas
(Nettwerk) | Blue Horse |
| 9. Bob Dylan
(Columbia) | Love and Theft |
| 10. Various Artists
(Mercury) | O' Brother Where Art Thou |
| 11. Various Artists
(Soul Jazz Records) | Studio 1 Soul |
| 12. Sigur Ros
(Fat Cat/MCA) | Agæis Byrjun |
| 13. Macy Gray
(Epic) | The ID |
| 14. Manu Chao
(Virgin) | Proxima Estacion Esperanza |
| 15. Habib Koite
(Putumayo) | Baro |
| 16. Orlando Cachaito Lopez
(World Circuit/Nonesuch) | Cachaito |
| 17. Lucinda Williams
(Lost Highway) | Essence |
| 18. Various Artists
(Eighteenth St. Lounge) | Modular Systems |
| 20. Gillian Welch
(Stony Plain) | Time (The Revelator) |

Highlife Records, 1317 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC

All charts compiled September - October 2001



Alpha Yaya Diallo

News

La Bottine Souriante are finalists in the BBC Radio 3 Awards For World Music. The Quebec combo's new disc *Cordial* is nominated in the Americas and Caribbean section along with **The Blind Boys of Alabama** (USA), **Cachaito Lopez** (Cuba) and **Los de Abajo** (Mexico). All nominees were selected at the recent WOMEX – the world music expo – in Rotterdam, Holland. The winners will be chosen by a jury from BBC Radio 3 and its partner organisations, which include *fRoots* magazine, *The Rough Guide to World Music* and WOMEX. The results will be announced January 28th. Other areas in contention include Africa, Asia / Pacific, Europe / Middle East, Boundary Crossing and Newcomer.

★★★

The Pogues are set to reform with their legendary frontman **Shane MacGowan** for a series of shows in Britain over one week in December. No reason has been given for the decision to put the line-up back together. MacGowan, the man who penned The Pogues' best known tracks such as *Fairytale Of New York*, *The Old Main Drag* and *Thousands Are Sailing*, was thrown out of the band in 1991 after his excessive drinking and drug-taking became too much. Former **Clash** frontman **Joe Strummer** took his place for several tours until the remaining members disbanded in 1995. The lineup will be from what is often considered the band's peak, the lineup that made the well known albums *If I Should Fall From Grace With God*, *Peace & Love*, and *Hell's*

Ditch. This will be: Shane MacGowan – vocals, guitar; **Jem Finer** – hurdy-gurdy, vocals, banjo, saxophone, guitar; **Darryl Hunt** – percussion, bass, vocals; **Philip Chevron** – guitar, vocals; **Terry Woods** – mandolin, vocals; **Spider Stacey** – tin whistle, vocals; **Andrew Rankin** – drums, vocals; and **James Fearnley** – accordion, vocals.

★★★

Shetland fiddler **Aly Bain** has left **The Boys of the Lough** after more than 30 years. His departure leaves flute player **Cathal McConnell** as the only remaining founder member. Fellow Scot, **Ian McFarlane**, will replace Bain, who will devote more of his time to his partnership with former **Silly Wizard** accordion player, **Phil Cunningham**.

And still in Scotland, ex-Battlefield Band multi-instrumentalist, **Brian McNeill**, has been appointed Head of Scottish Music at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow. He will lead the teaching staff for the Bachelor of Arts Scottish Music course which gives students the opportunity to further their instrumental skills and to explore the breadth of the national cultural heritage.

★★★

Juno award-winning **Tri-Continental** (**Bill Bourne**, **Madagascar Slim** and **Lester Quitau**) recently returned from a successful tour of Europe, where the German record label, Tradition and Moderne, released their new, double, live CD. Recorded last year in Bremen, Germany, it will be available in Canada in

the new year. Quitau's disc, *So Here We Are*, will also be released in Europe in March. He will tour there in April and May. While in Europe, Tri-Continental toured and recorded with Irish torch singer **Mary Coughlan**. She cut a new Bourne song, *Portland*, for a new as yet untitled upcoming disc.

Meanwhile, Bourne's concert dates with his former partner **Alan MacLeod** in early 2002 include: Jan. 26, Red Deer College Arts Centre, AB; Jan. 31, Banff Centre, AB; Feb. 7, Kenora, ON; Feb. 9, Winnipeg MB; Feb. 10, Regina, SK; Feb. 11, Saskatoon, SK; Feb. 15, Salmon Arm, BC; and Feb. 16, Vancouver, BC. Further dates are pending confirmation.

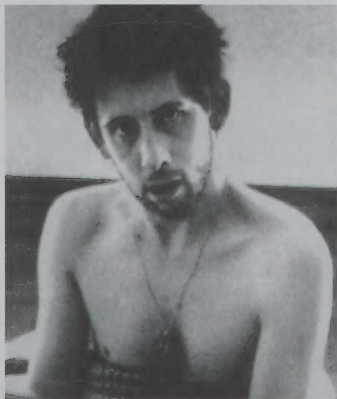
★★★

The Toronto Blues Society is putting its resource directory on line. The Blues Book will include a list of national performing artists, managers, agents, venues, festivals, producers, publications, radio stations, specialty retailers, teachers, schools, audio technicians and photographers. For more information about being included in the directory contact the society at info@torontobluesociety.com.

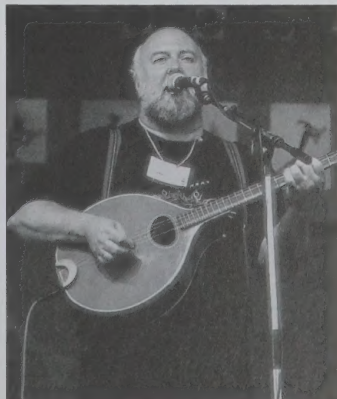
★★★

A new Internet discussion group focusing on traditional Canadian music is starting up at www.coollist.com/group.cgi?l=cantrad. According to its organisers, it is not meant as a list for singer-songwriters, jazz, bluegrass, etc, unless those topics relate to traditional Canadian music.

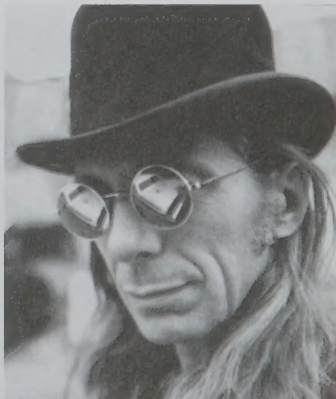
★★★



Shane MacGowan : Pogues reform, shock!



Brian McNeill



Bill Bourne: dates with Alan MacLeod

News

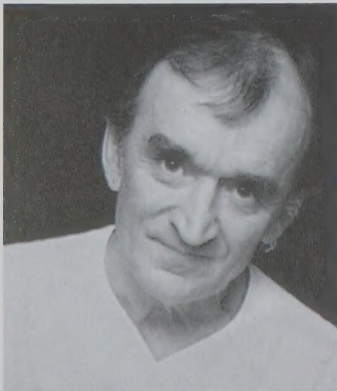
Victoria singer-songwriter, **Wyckham Porteous** can be heard on a regular basis on CBC Radio's drama series, *Hartfeldt*, Saskatchewan. It runs as part of CBC's This Morning program. The plot involves three sisters from the small fictional prairie community and follows their lives in three Canadian cities. Porteous plays Bob Woodruff, a forty-something folk singer, an ex-lover of one of the sisters, who is successful only in his own mind.

★★★

Oxford University Press' definitive biographical record of people who have contributed to British life, including the fields of politics, sport, the sciences and arts, is in the process of being updated for publication in print and on-line (www.oup.co.uk/newdnb) in 2004. Under **Brian Harrison's** editorship the New Dictionary of National Biography will dramatically expand the previous coverage of the folk arts, an area that over the century or so of its existence, the Dictionary of National Biography's many volumes stunted on Britain's folk music, barely going beyond **Ewan MacColl** and **Cecil Sharp**. This is being redressed for the next edition, for the NDNB is expanding to include key figures in the folk revival and the related singer-songwriter movement. Now in the closing cycle of writing entries, contributors such as **Patrick Humphries** and **Ken Hunt** have delivered biographical entries on the likes of **Peter Bellamy**, **Dolly Collins**, **Sandy Denny**, **Nick Drake** and **Lal Waterson**. The argus-eyed will have detected another criterion for inclusion: the subject must be dead.

★★★

Penguin Eggs contributor Ken Hunt is writing and researching a **Martin Carthy**



Martin Carthy: new biography

biography. To be published by the resurrected Swing 51 imprint in autumn 2002, the book is called **Prince Heathen: Martin Carthy and the English folksong revival** and it takes the folk revival story up to the release of Prince Heathen and the dissolution of the Carthy-Swarbrick partnership in 1969. Dave Swarbrick, at that point, went on to play with **Fairport Convention**. A second volume will take the story onwards. Central to the book is a twenty-year body of never-published interviews with Martin and other folk revival figures from Britain and beyond. For more information contact: Swing 51, 8 Hounslow Avenue, Hounslow, GB-TW3 2DX. England.

★★★

The Voice, 88.7 FM, in Orangeville, Ontario, has launched a two-hour radio show of blues and roots music every Thursday from 7:00 - 9:00 PM with host **Larry Kurtz**. It will focus on supporting Canadian talent along with the masters of the blues, as well as featuring live in-studio performances, interviews, and club listings.

Blues recording artists and record labels can forward CDs and promotional materials to: Roots n' Blues, c/o Larry Kurtz, 493 Broadway Avenue, Orangeville, Ontario, L9W 2Y9 or by emailing kurtzmill@aura-com.com.

★★★

The Canadian Musicians September 11th Relief Foundation recently released a benefit CD, *Tears of a Thousand Years*. It includes a previously unreleased track by the late **Stan Rogers**. Other folk and roots contributors include **Valdy**, **Eileen McGann**, **Lynn Harrison**, **Brent Titcomb**, **David Bradstreet**, **Katherine Wheatley**, **Scott Cameron Smith**, **James Gordon** with **Sandy Horne**, **Randy Uberig**, **Don Bray**, **The Laws**, **Doug**



Photo: Edmonton Folk Music Festival

Stan Rogers: previously unheard track on benefit disc

MacArthur, **Aengus Finnan**, **Tim Harrison**, **Paul Langille**, **D'Arcy Wickham** and **John Gracie**. All proceeds will go to the New York State and Salvation Army September 11th Relief Funds.

★★★

UK songwriter **Robb Johnson** has put together *Article 14*, "a benefit CD for the Medical Foundation For Victims of Torture in support of the work they do on behalf of asylum seekers." At least two pounds from each sale will go to the Medical Foundation. Several of the compositions and performances – such as Johnson's *Hands Off My Friends* and Leon Rosselson's *They Said* – are exclusive to the anthology.

The featured performers represent the diverse nature of musical cultures in 21 century Britain. A taste of this diversity is indicated by the presence of the **A39s**, **Alula Andeta**, **Chumbawamba**, **Fun>Da>Mental**, **Bill Jones**, **Barb Jung**, **Rory McLeod**, **Orchestra Super Moth**, **Jocelyn Pook** (with a vocal ensemble that includes **Dissidenten's Manickam Yogaswaran**), **Tom Robinson** and **Rajan Spolia**. Contact Irregular Records, PO Box 72, Hounslow, GB-TW5 0YB

★★★

Tribute albums come in many shapes and standards. One more unusual one in progress is *Here Comes The Sun*, based on the songs of **Lal** and **Mike Waterson**, drawn from their luminescent album *Bright Phoebus* and associated demos. The participants, indicative of the brother-and-sister team's standing, are a Who's Who of the British Folk World. It can be disclosed that **Billy Bragg** & **The Bloses**, **Dick Gaughan**, **Christy Moore**, **Maddy Prior**, **Jody Stecher** & **Kate Brislin**, **Linda** & **Teddy Thompson**, and **Richard Thompson** are among the cast



Rory McLeod pays tribute to The Watsons

News

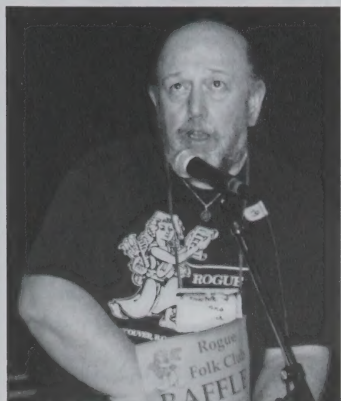


Photo: David Ingram

Steve Edge

who have done their bit. Stand by for label news.

★★★

Vancouver's Rogue Folk Club has enjoyed a remarkable turnaround in its fortunes. (See P.E. Issue 10). Facing serious financial difficulties after 14 years of running 50 to 60 shows a year, personal donations and a successful benefit concert – featuring the likes of **Mad Pudding**, **Tim Readman**, **Alan MacLeod** and a variety of other local singers and musicians – helped eliminate an \$8,000 debt and place the West Coast institution comfortably into the pink.

"We've had a five-figure turnaround," club patriarch **Steve Edge** told Penguin Eggs. "I'm very grateful. The thing is, you always question if what you do is worth something to other people. This incredible response just proves it most certainly is. You can't beat that feeling."

★★★

After four years, Winnipeg's folk and blues magazine, *Scene*, has folded. The glossy, free, quarterly initially started as a blues magazine but expanded its scope to no avail. Gone too is *Songlines*, the colorful world music quarterly published in the U.K. Launched in 1998, it ran for 11 issues, just like its predecessor *World Beat*. But on a brighter note, the Victoria-based publication, *Real Blues*, has resurged after an absence of a year.

★★★

A series of thematic 4-CD sets documenting aspects of the British folk revival are in preparation. Fledgling Records' founder, **David Suff**, who is compiling all three, offers, "It's a great time to reassess this material and package it sensitively." The first boxed set will be Topic Records' *The Acoustic Folk Box*. Set provisionally for early spring release, at its

heart is a collection of archival releases from Topic and many other British folk labels, many long-gone and forgotten. It will also include unreleased live performances – **Nic Jones'** *Billy Don't You Weep For Me* is one example. Its 84 tracks will chronicle the changes in style, complexion and presentation of the folk revival from **Lonnie Donegan** to **Eliza Carthy**.

The second in the sequence is **Shirley Collins'** *Witbin Sound*. Already well advanced in development, it plots her career from the late 1950s, with many 'lost' and previously unreleased live performances adding fresh insights. Collins is writing the main notes for the accompanying book and has provided many of the photographs.

The last is Topic's retrospective of one of the revival's most influential folk groups, the Yorkshire-based **Watersons**. Its working title is *Mighty River of Song*. It draws on their standard Topic releases, contributions from the *Hard Cash* and *Out On The Rolling Sea* anthologies, and a host of previously unissued live tracks from around the world. It also draws in the **Blue Murder** side-project and **Waterson: Carthy**. Like *The Acoustic Folk Box*, the set will be lavishly illustrated and contain detailed booklet notes.

Deaths

Reclusive American singer-songwriter **Fred Neil** died in Florida of cancer, July 7. He was 64. Neil, best known for *Everybody's Talkin'*, a hit for **Harry Nilsson** in 1969, first rose to prominence in the Greenwich Village coffee houses of the early '60s. He proved an inspiration for the likes of **John Sebastian**, **David Crosby**, **Tim Buckley** and **Bob Dylan**. Neil released his last album in 1971, which featured **Gram Parsons**, but gave up music completely four years later. His songs have been covered by **Roy Orbison**, **Jefferson Airplane**, **Buddy Holly**, **Linda Ronstadt** and **Eddie Reader** among others.

★★★

Irish fiddler **Tommy Gunn** from Co. Fermagh died October 6. He was 89. Gunn was an original founder of **The Boys of the Lough** in 1967, and a great source of many of their initial tunes, just as he was for other bands such as **De Dannan**. Gunn dropped out of the scene in the late '60s due to the rigors of touring.

★★★

Zimbabwean **Marshall Munhumumwe**, died on October 13 from complications he suffered after a

Rick Fielding plays *The Flying Cloud*

stroke. Munhumumwe, a drummer and vocalist with **The Four Brothers**, was the nephew of **Thomas Mapfumo**. The Four Brothers played a hard driving combination of Shona and chimurenga and enjoyed several hits in Zimbabwe.

Folk Club Concerts

The Flying Cloud: Tranzac Club, 292 Brunswick Ave, Toronto (416 410 FOLK). Jan. 7, **Folkal Point**; Jan. 14, **The Dottie Cormier Band**; Jan. 28, **A Night Burns** would have liked with **Enoch Kent**; Feb. 4, **Marie-Lynn Hammond** and **Nancy White**; Feb. 11, **Valdy** and **Gary Fjellgaard**; Feb. 18, **Ian Bell**; Feb. 25, **Storytellers Festival**; Mar. 4, **Rick Fielding**, **Grit Laskin** and **Paul Mills**; Mar. 11, **James Keelaghan**; Mar. 17, **Owen McBride**; Mar. 18, **Tamarack**; Mar. 25, **Jim Payne** and **Fergus O'Byrne**.

★★★

The Vital Spark Folk Society:

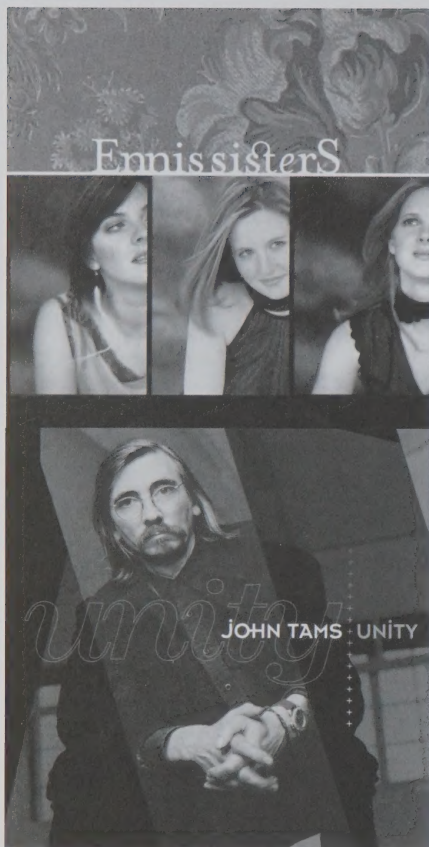
Brooklin Community Centre, 45 Cassels Road, Brooklin, Ontario (905.430.8692 or 905.432.3237). Jan. 19, **Chris & Ken Whiteley**; Feb. 16, **Daisy DeBolt** and **Clay Tyson**; Mar. 16, **Lynn Miles**; May 11, **Betty and The Bobs**.

★★★

Full Moon Folk Club

Bonnie Doon Hall 9240 - 93 Street, Edmonton, Alberta (780-438-6410). Jan. 19, **Jean Hewson & Christina Smith**; Feb. 2, **David Essig** and **Mississippi Steamboat**; Feb. 15, **Dennis Lakusta**; Mar. 2, **Vin Garbutt**; Mar. 23, **Chris Smither**; April 6, **Tom Paxton**; April 12, **Barachois**; May 3, **Austin Lounge Lizards**.

★★★



penguin eggs

Competition

Win Ennis Sisters or John Tams CDs

Here are the questions for the new comp:

- 1 What English folk roots band brought John Tams to the fore?
- 2 What regional award did the Ennis Sisters earn in 1997 for their debut recording.

England's multi-talented John Tams – an exceptional guitarist and melodeon player – has made trail blazing albums with two very famous English roots bands over the past 30 years. He has also enjoyed an exceptional career in acting. However, *Unity*, his excellent latest recording, is his first solo disc. And Topic Records have generously donated six copies for you to win.

The Ennis Sisters, hail from Newfoundland, and have made quite a local reputation for themselves, winning countless awards in the past four years. They are now distributed nationally by Warner Bros, who have kindly donated three copies of their latest disc for some lucky winners.

To enter the draw for either of these excellent CDs please answer the above questions and e-mail your answers to penguineggs@hotmail.com.

And please, include your postal address so we can forward your prize.

The 12 winners of the past contest are as follows:

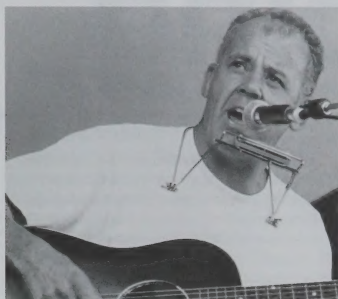
Michelle Bezenar, Edmonton, AB
Gail Buente, Vancouver BC
Rob Gibson, Evanton, Scotland
Jim MacLachlan, Toronto, ON

Jacqueline Hutchison, Edmonton, AB
John Coleman, Oshawa, ON
Stephen Dowds, Cromarty, Scotland
Lorna Osbourne, Mission, BC

Bruce Meredith, Coutice, ON
Peter Burns, Edmonton, AB
Richard Janezcko, Toronto, ON
Al Valente, Edmonton, AB;

The answers were (1) James Keelaghan, (2) John Lewis.

News



Willie P. Bennett: Northern Lights date

Cuckoo's Nest

Chaucer's Pub, 122 Carling Street, London Ontario (519-673-0334). Dec. 16, **Alistair Brown and Ian Bell**; Jan. 20, **Tanglefoot**; Feb. 1, **Ron Hynes**; Mar. 3, **Norland Wind**; April 2, **Fairport Convention**; April 20, **Waterson/Carthy**, May 5, **Anne Lederman's Fiddlesong Trio**.

★★★

The Nickelodeon Music Club

Crescent Heights Community Hall, 1101 - 2nd St. N.W., Calgary, Alberta (403-284-5440). Jan. 12, **Matapat and Maria Dunn**; Jan. 26, **Dave Carter & Tracy Grammer**; Feb. 9, **Willie P. Bennett and Mike Stack**; Feb. 23, **J. P. Cormier and Clanterra**.

★★★

The Newfoundland Folk Music Club

The Ship Inn on Solomon's Lane (265 Duckworth), St. John's, Newfoundland (709-576-8508). Dec. 5, **Ron Hynes**; Dec. 12, **Art Stoyles, Hugh Scott, Gayle Tapper, Len Penton, and Bob Rutherford**; Dec. 19, **A Crowd of Bold Sharemen**; Dec. 26, **Boxing Day Session**.

★★★

Folk Under The Clock

Market Hall, 336 George St. N. Peterborough, Ontario (705) 743-3372. Dec. 8, **Guy Davis**; Jan. 26, **Danu**; Mar. 2, **Norland Wind**; April 4, **Fairport**



Tom Paxton: due at the Calgary Folk Club

Convention; April 27, **Stacey Earle**.

★★★

The Calgary Folk Club

Dalhousie Community Centre, 5432 Dalhart Road NW, Calgary, Alberta (403-286-5651). Jan. 4, **Valdy & Gary Fjellgaard**; Jan. 18, **Jean Hewson & Christina Smith**; Feb. 1, **The Barra MacNeils**; Feb. 15, **Cowboy Celtic**; Mar. 1, **Vin Garbutt**; Mar. 15, **Limelinters**; April 5, **Tom Paxton**.

★★★

Saturday Night Special

Braeside Community Centre, 11024 Braeside Drive SW, Calgary, Alberta (403-271-3719). Jan. 12, **Rick Scott**; Feb. 2, **The Barra MacNeils**; Feb. 23, **Guy Davis**; Mar. 16, **Don Ross and Carlos Del Junco**.

★★★

Beneath The Arch Folk Club

Flare 'n Derrick Community Hall, Main Street, Turner Valley, Alberta (403-933-5811). Jan. 26, **Jerusalem Ridge**; Feb. 22, **J.P. Cormier**; Mar. 16, **Kieran Kane & Kevin Welch**; Apr. 6, **Ray Bonneville**.

★★★

Northern Lights Folk Club

Queen Alexandra, Community Hall, 10425 University Ave., Edmonton, Alberta (780 438 2736). Jan. 12, **Joel Krocker and Dale Nikkel**; Feb. 8, **Willie P. Bennett and Mike Stack**; Feb. 16, **Valdy and Down to the Wood**; Mar. 16, **Scona Brae and Toupey Luft**; Apr. 13, **Tom Wilson and Terry Morrison**.

★★★

Quotes

"The recording we did of *I'm In The Mood* was one of the highest erotic experiences of my life. There's a point on the tape I say, 'Man, I need a towel!'"

— **Bonnie Raitt**, on recording with **John Lee Hooker**. *Mojo*, September, 2001.

Never Mind The Bollocks

"**Bob Dylan**... is still a songwriter, singer and literary artist of continuing power and depth. If there was any principal meaning to Dylan's early music, perhaps it was that it is hardly trouble-free for a smart, conscientious person to live in times that witness the betrayal or inversion of our best values and dreams. To live through such times with scruples and intellect intact, Dylan has declared in his music, one has to hold an honest and fearless mirror up to the face of cultural and moral disorder."

— A sycophantic **Mikal Gilmore** in *Rolling Stone* No. 882

Editorial

It's a rum old world we live in, right enough. In the brief span of the last issue our world changed irrevocably. No words can adequately describe the horror felt here as the news broke from New York, September 11. Such tragedy, frankly, left me numb for days. How trivial music seemed in the face of such an appalling disregard for life. How sadly fickle the cruel hand of fate.

But time, as my dear mum frequently reminds me, is the greatest healer. And despite the nauseating repercussions, both inside and outside of Afghanistan, the world became more sharply defined with the cultural liberation of Kabul.

With the expulsion of the religious fanaticism of the dogmatic Taliban, people turned to music and movies to bring unreserved joy back into their lives. They danced in the streets and they lined up for hours to see old films. Their joy was infectious, I can tell you. I laughed out loud.

Of course, such simple pleasures will not alleviate the complex political and social turmoil that remains there, but it does add comfort. Music matters. And that, more than ever, defines my belief in *Penguin Eggs*.

As we end our first year in print, I'm equally grateful to report that the response for the magazine has been quite overwhelming. Our subscriber base increased fifty percent in six months. Advertising revenue has grown by a phenomenal two-hundred percent. And the number of pages to date has expanded twenty-five percent. But equally important, we have recruited talented, insightful writers from coast to coast to give a truly representative perspective of what's going on around the country. And what's more, in England's Ken Hunt, we have added our first international freelance journalist in an attempt to bolster global content.

Plans for the Spring issue include a national critics survey to determine the Canadian folk, roots or world music album of the year, as well as their discovery of 2001. Now there is a contest that whets the appetite, what with the recent emergence of numerous new talent here in the past twelve months. Has there been a better year for folk-roots in Canada in recent memory?

Till the next time, peace, joy and prosperity to you, your family and friends in the upcoming year

— **Roddy Campbell**

Tubthumping



Luther Wright & The Wrongs

Back to the Wall

Barnyard boffins, Luther Wright & The Wrongs reinvented Pink Floyd's opus, *The Wall*. Fish Griwkowsky considers the carnage.

Tear down the wall! Tear down the wall! Wait a minute... this just in. Rebuild the wall! Rebuild the wall! What the hell? Make up your mind, already! You want a wall or not?

And so it was done, amid a cyclone of ideas, reorchestrations and legal alligator wrestling, Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, favourite of every suicidal teenager who didn't like being told what to do since 1979, was rebuilt. Tweaked some, but rebuilt. Nary a brick was to be found, though, troublesome in wall-building, you'll have to agree. So what did Luther Wright and his Wrongs use? Hay bales, of course.

And so it was about 8,000 days after Roger Waters did his famous tribute to the weird, ugly downward trip of Syd Barrett (or whatever your interpretation), that someone came along and did a "country" version of *The Wall*. You heard me, cowboy. Every track, down to the last terrified scream.

Cuteness aside, 37-year-old Luther Wright wasn't some kind of hazy Floydhead when he and his band began to brag they'd pull off the impossible a couple years back. But his dedication to this unlikely project did the band well; they were fast signed on to Universal because of it, and have since endured the meet-and-greets that having label support will drag a man through, along with some tasty capital to spread the word in these darker days. Wright has a lot to say about a lot of things, but starting with advocacy performance, let's get into it.

"This is a dangerous time, now more than ever it's

time to drop the anvil of art on people's heads. Have you ever read Jack London's, *The Iron Heel*? He predicts the oligarchy, the division of classes and the fact the affluent classes are unaware that people are suffering, you know, they just think they're angry and bitter without reason."

Does this mean that some of the heavy-handed commentary against society found in *The Wall* still sticks?

"As it turns out, more than ever," Wright stresses. "It's surprising people are being duped by CNN and the major papers, there are so many ways to find out the entire story. It's easier to go online, for example, but I suppose a lot of people are too busy in their lives. That said, I don't want to get too serious all the time. It's a good time to be out touring, everything feels more necessary, and when you're a performer you're better off not complaining, but seeming to have a good time so people can live vicariously through your rock and rollness. People respect it and you can use that respect wisely by inserting just enough ironic humour into a performance, just enough to provoke thought."

There was a band from Kingston called Weeping Tile, you may know its most famous member Sarah Harmer, a thoughtful, gorgeous performer in her own right. Things are tough in Canada, though, so five years ago Wright with drummer Cam Giroux, plus bassist Sean Kelly, began to busk on the street for extra money.

"There was always a country thing going on in the dressing room and hotels," Wright explains. "We were doing it to make a little money, we were always so broke, to be honest. We had some time off and soon enough we got offered a gig by some folks walking by

on the street."

Luther Wright and the Wrongs, it should be mentioned at this point, manage to put out some pretty good, old-style country, lots of swing, crooning and barnyard energy. Not the kind of thing you're likely to hear on the power hat stations, more like college radio, CBC, sideroad music. Being the young men that they are, a little punk rock slips under the sheets now and then weird covers under the covers. They put out an album, produced by Harmer, called *Hurtin' for Certain*, following it up with another indie disc.

"When Weeping Tile slowed down playing, the Wrongs had just put out *Roger's Waltz*, and the Wrongs became a full-time project. We got a pedal steel player (Olesh Maximew), kept grooving away and did a couple of Canadian tours. We began boasting about recording *The Wall* on Jan. 1 2000, the beginning of the new Millennium," Wright says, simultaneously bringing the history to the present and proving he's not a math nerd.

Reaction was mixed, more accurately overwhelmingly good, save for a few snotty reviews (including mine in the Edmonton Sun, which the band hilariously posted first thing on their Web page for ages). But word was, Roger Waters liked it a lot as well as Alice Cooper, KISS, and Rod Stewart. Bob Ezrin, producer of *The Wall*, sent an email: "Enjoying the album. Wish you good luck." They hardly needed it, because things have been candy and long legs since. Well, mostly.

"There's been a few things, one person, really. We were playing and he walked up and handed me this letter in the middle of our set. I thought it was something nice, he was smiling and he met my eyes. We read it after and it was like, 'I hate you guys, how could you do this, I hope you die.' Pretty hardcore. The lesson is of course not to look crazy people in the eyes.

They're dangerous. I mean, when you slagged us it was because you thought that the idea of doing someone else's work in its entirety would get us pegged as a novelty band, and I respect that. That's articulate. But when someone comes up to you and threatens you, it's scary."

Fear. So many things are coming back to fear lately. Wright brings politics back into the conversation, in the context of connecting with people.

"It's a good time to hear what other people have to say. Traveling seems more vital than anything right now... Opinions now can change quickly, need to change quickly, and music is a form of communication that can facilitate that. I don't know if I'm going to write songs about this, I don't really understand where writing comes from.

What goes into songs seems to be the magic potion, but it's definitely affecting the way we're playing. We'll step on a distortion pedal more now and let the powerful songs come out, things that speak to the punk rock we'd all survived.

"Music is politics, no matter how small. Politics are about communication, and so is music. Ultimately, hopefully, the message in both is love."

Tubthumping

Evergreen

Greentrax Records celebrates its 15th anniversary this year. Ken Hunt reckons this label is the dog's bollocks of Scottish music.

Given the amount of column inches, their cyber counterparts and airtime devoted to them, everyone must love anniversaries. 2001 produced a particularly handsome crop. Yet even if Greentrax Records' ranked beneath the coverage dedicated to, say, Biermann, Carthy, Dylan et al (Stewart), Greentrax's fifteenth anniversary meant something.

Greentrax belongs to a select gathering, record labels that damn near provided a sure-fire guarantee of musical quality. South of the Canadian border, Elektra once had that reputation. South of the Scottish border, Topic managed something similar for most of its sixty-odd years. So describing Greentrax as the nearest thing to Topic Records that Scotland has produced involves no half- or short-measure of Sassenach praise. Trust.

Greentrax was the brainchild of Ian Green, born in 1934 on the outskirts of Forres in Morayshire. His father, John Green, was an estate gardener but most partial to the pipes – well represented in Greentrax's catalogue – while his mother, Mary, had been in service.

"At weekends it was not an uncommon sight to see my father and my uncle, Bill Duncan, marching up and down outside the house, giving it a really good blast on the pipes."

"Subjected" (he coughs) to this abomination 'live' and on the wireless – his father was an avid radio listener – Ian and his brother preferred listening to anything but Jimmy Shand, his kith and proxy kin. One evening, Korean War service behind him, a life in crime before him, fate intervened. Ian turned on the television and there was Hootenanny. Its folk music poleaxed him. Next day, as the admen slaver nowadays, he 'owned' the tie-in album: "I suppose the stuff that I'd picked up in my childhood had stuck." Revisiting it, I became absolutely hooked on it and it wasn't that long before I was obsessed."

In 1985 Green retired from the constabulary after thirty years' service. Over the coming months he applied his experience of masterminding the Edinburgh Police Folk Club (wittily nicknamed "Fuzzfolk") where he booked the likes of Eric Bogle, Billy Connolly, Barbara Dickson, Vin Garbutt and Nic Jones, co-cranking the Edinburgh folk scene's parish pump (Sandy Bell's Broadsheet), and running a discount folk record service (pithily christened Discount Folk Records).

In 1986 when he founded Greentrax on a police pension, a play on words, a wing and a prayer, the Scottish recording scene was lethargic, overdosed on shortbread tin stereotype and slices of tartan counterfeited tradition. Greentrax's antidote to "heather, haggis, tartan and mystic glens" was overdue.

A time to backtrack, as Ecclesiastes says. Sandy Bell's Broadsheet had periodically struggled to pay its bills. A fund-raising album was suggested and "the cream of the Edinburgh crop" represented by Alby Bain, Dick Gaughan and others volunteered their services.

"You might describe me as the executive producer

but, though I had no knowledge of recording studios at all, I was absolutely fascinated by the process. *Sandy Bell's Ceilidh* had quite a live feel to it and it sold very, very well."

Greentrax would reissue it on cassette in 1987, passing the profits of its sales to "the magazine that succeeded Sandy Bell's Broadsheet, *The Living Tradition*". Thinking out loud, Ian muses, "I'm thinking, just purely for nostalgic reasons, to re-release it on CD and *The Living Tradition* would benefit again from the royalties."

The thing about getting involved in making Sandy Bell's Ceilidh was he had had a taste. However hooked on the process of making records, he was still in the police. The Greentrax germ remained quiescent but Eric Bogle coming along with his revelator songs would have tempted even the hairshirtedest musical Knoxian:

"We all wondered who this Scotsman was that nobody knew! Whilst he was over, he started doing a few gigs around clubs. Not only had he written *And The Band Played "Waltzing Matilda"*, he'd written these astounding songs like *No Man's Land* and *Leaving Nancy!* Bogle had yet to record these songs and was loath to do so. Back in Australia, he was persuaded, making him even more of a temptation/inspiration.

(Years later, Warren Fahey of Larrikin imported Green in an alleyway one MIDEM dangling Bogle's oeuvre; it was "a lifelong ambition come true" – the licensing rights, not the alleyway.)

Greentrax's launch with Ian Hardie's *A Breath of Fresh Air* coincided with "a real eruption of talent". Fate conspired to overwhelm Ian's best-laid, sensible plans. Self-nominated abandoned. In short order, the McCalmans, Aly Bain & Friends, Jean Redpath and sig-

nificant others joined the roster.

The extent of Greentrax's coverage of the contemporary Scottish music scene, both the current work of Mairi Mac Innes, Margaret Stewart and Allan MacDonald or Jean Redpath and its Scottish diaspora manifestations epitomized by Natalie MacMaster, Tony McManus, Slainte Mhath and Brenda Stubbert is unique.

But it has also 'looked back' through its reissues in 1998 of Topic's Cilla Fisher and Artie Trezise, Willie Scott, Belle Stewart albums or its ongoing programme of *The Scottish Tradition Series*, Scotland's nearest equivalent to Topic's *Voice of the People* series. Vagaries of funding have caused problems; candidly spoken, this is a cultural, not a commercial proposition.

"There are certain things that we release knowing full well that we're not going to make money off them. We are happy if we clear our costs. We don't look to a lot of these albums bringing in a handsome profit. We feel that they should be out there and available though clearly you can't lose money on everything you release or you don't stay in business long."

Regardless would be a cliché but the *Scottish Tradition Series* soldiers on with volumes on Borders, Orkadian and children's music under way. Let's ride into the gloaming on a hobbyhorse. Obsessionally lumping Scottish music into what over here seems like the perversely hilarious rubric of 'Celtic Music' is to Scots music what Drano is to eroticism. Without stooping to puff but unapologetically stooping to pun, Greentrax is the real MacCoy.

Greentrax is Scotland's Topic Records. Charge your glasses to toast an achievement that really matters. Ladies and gentlemen, a dram to the dog's bollocks of Scottish music in our lifetime.



Ian Green

Tubthumping

Into the West

On her new disc, *Beyond The Storm*, Eileen McGann sets the record straight about Medusa and Henry II's missus. Roddy Campbell takes ample notes.

It makes no sense. None at all. Well, just think about it. Eileen McGann plays the largest folk clubs and festivals in Britain and Ireland. She also receives her rightful respect throughout the U.S. Yet here at home, she remains relatively unknown despite a series of recordings that earned raves and rewards alike elsewhere.

Regardless, McGann still sounds smugly content these days. And for good reason. For starters, she moved from Calgary to a beautiful Vancouver Island community dear to her heart. There, she and her partner David K have built their own cozy studio, Blue House, in Mill Bay, and continues to develop her considerable talents as a painter when time permits between jaunts abroad. And oh yes, and did I mention she has just released a new album?

Clearly, *Beyond The Storm*, from the cover art to the closing a cappella *Island Home*, draws much of its inspiration from her new community.

"It's a wonderfully creative place to be, this island. It's a calm place. I've always lived in cities before now. I thought it would take me a while to adjust to living rurally but it hasn't. It took a day or two. There's a sense of quiet calm and space here that is so creative. I tend to write a lot when I walk. And here I can walk all the year round between trees and water. So a lot of the songs were written walking by the water's edge here."

Beyond The Storm, like its predecessors, *Journeys*, *Turn It Around* and *Elements*, contains the usual astute balance of original and traditional songs. Of course, *Heritage*, her last disc, was an all traditional tribute to her Irish parentage.

"I expect to do another traditional album or two in the future. There are so many wonderful traditional songs I love to sing. All my CDs have a few but going at that rate, only putting one or two or three or four per album, there's just so many I have to leave off. So I imagine every few albums I'll do an all traditional one."

In the meantime, she has recorded and rejigged the harrowing tale of *Bonnie Susie Cleland* (Bonnie Susie's to be hanged rather than married in this version) and the deeply impressive adaptation of the Gaelic, *Water Kelpie's Lullaby*.

"It's beautiful. I love the Celtic a cappella tradition. The *Water Kelpie's Lullaby* was a challenge because it is so simple a melody in some ways. But in some ways it's a difficult song to sing because there's a number of words in a row that are all exactly the same note and it's a challenge to sing that and keep it steady. Although it's such a simple melody in terms of it not doing a whole lot of ups and downs and swoops or anything, it's such a haunting melody and such an unusual story. I just loved it."

Just as intriguing is the pair of remarkable songs she collected and re-worked while doing a Masters degree in Medieval Studies in London before turning to music full time in 1989. Both relate to 'fair' Rosamond,

the teenage mistress of King Henry II of England. While *Young Clifford & Fair Rosamond* deals with the mysterious beauty, *The Ballad Of Fair Rosamond* actually details the rise and fall of the feisty Eleanor of Aquitaine, Henry's wife.

"When I was living in England... I started researching the relationship between Eleanor and fair Rosamond. I went to the Cecil Sharp House in London and that's where I came up with *Young Clifford*. Which is a song I never heard before or since."

"The other one is actually the amalgamation of two ballads, a 16th C. broadsheet and an 18th C. ballad, each of which told part of the story. So I took most of the 16th C. ballad, since it was by far the better, and filled in some of the gaps in the story from the 18th C. one and wrote a new tune."

"I think the thing most interesting about Rosamond was the tradition that said she was murdered by Queen Eleanor. The fact is Henry got tired of (Rosamond) after nine or 10 years and put her away in a convent where she died of natural causes. Meanwhile Queen Eleanor was put in jail for starting a rebellion against her husband that almost unseated the most powerful king in Europe."

But the popular imagination couldn't deal with a woman being that powerful. Yet they had to account for the fact that she was kept in jail for 15 years. So they came up with the story that queen Eleanor, out of the jealousy of an older woman, murdered fair Rosamond.

"It's also ironic that Queen Eleanor was the primary patron of the arts of the day. Hundreds of writers and musicians lived off her and made their living and reputation off her encouragement and her support. And how did they repay her?"

Not surprisingly, McGann frequently puts the same impressive research into her own writing. *Medusa*, for instance, on *Beyond The Storm*, is a prime example. Largely known through the legends of the warrior Perseus who slew her, McGann sympathetically looks at the reality behind the myth of the Greek goddess vilified for centuries as an ugly monster.

"*Medusa* was inspired initially when I was in Boston looking up at an old building. There was the head of Medusa on the side of this building. I was really struck by it and stood there looking at her for a while and thinking, 'What must it have been like for her.' I went and did some research and I found out some really surprising things, like she had lived most of her life as a beautiful winged maiden and it was only in the last few months of her life that she was uglified and snake-haired."

"And I didn't know that she was also Pegasus' mother. It just struck me as very surprising and profound that this symbol of ugliness was the mother of one of the symbols of beauty through the centuries. So I was thinking of the whole beauty thing in our culture and the goddesses who curse the rest of us to feel like Medusa."

Meanwhile, her inspirational *Wisdom Guide Me*, from the new CD, appears on the Canadian benefit compilation, *Tears Of A Thousand Years*. All proceeds from it will go to the victims, survivors and families of the September 11 tragedy in New York. It will feature the likes of James Gordon, Auengus Finnian and Valdy.

And naturally enough, plans for McGann's 2002 UK tour are well underway with an appearance at Birmingham's Red Lion — the biggest folk club in Britain — anticipated as a possible highlight. In the meantime, she is content to get to know the musical community on the Island and to indulge herself in her other great passion.

"Painting is like a visual music. It's a different way of singing. It's singing with color instead of musical notes. They work very naturally together and I often find when I'm in a very creative space from painting I'll go in to the other room and pick up my guitar and work on some writing. And then go back to do some more color."

Some people have all the luck.

Sole Music

Shoes of A Man, proved an auspicious recording debut for Maria Dunn. Her latest disc, *For A Song*, fulfills that promise reckons Roddy Campbell.

Archie Fisher is missing in action — a no-show for his interview with Penguin Eggs in Winnipeg. Bugger. It turns out an apologetic Maria Dunn whisked the former moonshiner away for a cosy chat and a cold beer. And never one to resist...

Several weeks later, Fisher plays Dunn's *Shoes Of A Man* on his BBC Scotland radio program, *Traveling Folk*, and generously extolls her song writing talents. As well he might.

Shoes of A Man appears on her highly commendable debut disc, *From Where I Stand*. And now the Edmonton-based Dunn has just released, *For A Song*. Like its predecessor, it abounds with poignant tales of



Eileen McGann

Tubthumping

colorful historical characters and events. Its *Maggie Thompson*, for instance, offers a unique take on the massacre of Ontario's "Black Donnellys". *Heather Down Road* notes the independence of spirit gleaned by women working in non-traditional jobs during WW I. And then there's the utterly splendid, *The Lingan Strike*, an uplifting true event that saw Scottish and Cape Breton coal miners unite in a union dispute despite overwhelming adversity. The initial inspiration for it came from a brief paragraph in Desmond Morton's *Working People: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Labor Movement*.

"I just picked this book up in a second-hand bookstore in BC. And I came across this paragraph about these miners who came all the way from Scotland and didn't realize they were to replace striking Cape Breton miners," says Dunn over an autumn afternoon coffee on Edmonton's trendy Whyte Avenue. "This was in 1882 when the mining unions were very fledgling and miners were struggling for absolute basic safety standards and pay. These Scottish miners had sailed 3000 miles to go to work and when they got there they refused to undermine their Cape Breton brothers. And I thought, 'Wow, that is an inspiring story.'"

It took a fair bit of digging to put it all together. But then again, she did spend 10 years as a research assistant in rehab medicine and psychology before taking up this song writing malarkey on a full time basis in 1999.

Her first historical showpiece, *New York 1840*, emerged from old family letters. *Shoes Of A Man* was inspired by her grandfather. It fiercely reflects on the aspirations of a downtrodden yet proud and defiant Scottish pensioner. And *Orphan Hand* — a heartbreaking tale about indentured British children used as slave labor in rural Canada in the last century — began with a character in E. Annie Proulx's novel, *The Shipping News*. All the aforementioned songs are formed with a traditional barng.

"It's hard to say whether I consciously thought, 'Well I want to further the tradition so I'll write songs in that vein.' I've always loved traditional music. That's where I found a lot of my inspiration. I'm far more interested in hearing a song where I learn something about the world than hearing a song that is inward looking. I think we do need these songs too. And they are important. But sometimes I think there's a little too much of that. We could use a little bit more substance."

"People do connect very personally to a song that is about Home Children (*Orphan Hand*) — the story of a child coming to Canada and being neglected or abused, the hopes that that young person might have had only to be mistreated. I think that people not only learn about the Home Children in Canada they go, 'Whoa! That actually happened here in Canada.' They also connect personally to the lost dreams, the frustration — working really hard and being neglected. So you can still make that connection with an audience as a songwriter by telling a story. You get the information out and you also get the emotional connection. Those are the songs that interest me and if that's in the tradition, that's wonderful."

Maria Dunn was born in Falkirk, Scotland but



Maria Dunn

immigrated in 1966 with her parents to Sarnia, Ontario. They brought their Robin Hall and Jimmy McGregor records with them.

"I loved listening to that music. And when we lived in Ontario the parties that my parents would have with other ex-pats," you know, when you get them all together you can't stop them from singing. You can't just sit there. Everybody has to do their party piece. I'm sure that had some influence. I always played piano, sang in choirs. I always liked music. I always loved singing."

Ten years later, her father, an electrical engineer, moved the family west to Edmonton. And there they stayed. In the early '80s, she discovered CJSR — the University of Alberta campus radio station — and The Clash, Elvis Costello and suchlike. Then a friend introduced her to The Pogues and Spirit of the West.

"And all of a sudden this connection with the alternative music I liked was leading me back to the traditional music and folk music I had some knowledge of as a kid."

Subsequently, she started her own folk and roots program on CJSR. The piano then took a back seat to a guitar. She learned Gaelic, spent some time in Nova Scotia and Europe, and after a fledgling start at open mics, she helped form a series of local bands, including the niftily-titled Greasy Lake. Their repertoire stretched from traditional Gaelic songs to Gram Parsons covers.

"Once you've experienced the thrill of playing for people and connecting with them, and having them appreciate it, it spurs you on to further shenanigans."

"I had always thought I would make a CD with a

band and it just never happened. I think at some point if you really want something to happen you've just got to make it happen yourself. And it was around the time people were giving me feedback on my own songs. Terry Wickham (artistic director of the Edmonton folk music festival) booked me on the basis of hearing my songs at a song contest. So that kind of helped me focus a little bit more and drove me to start doing it under my own name."

Maria Dunn released *From Where I Stand* in 1998. While it retained eclectic elements of Greasy Lake, *For A Song* took matters even further with *Grá Geal Me Chroí* (an a cappella Gaelic air found in a songbook from Newfoundland), *Poor Lonesome Hen* (a lovely piece of original mouth music sang mainly in English), and *Lonesome And Then Some* (a blistering bluegrass wobbler).

"I've loved bluegrass for a long time. I think it's very closely tied to the Irish and Scottish traditions. I got really excited listening to Hazel Dickens singing songs from the first Primitive Baptist Bible. These songs reminded me very much of the Lewis Psalm singing in Scotland. They're really highly ornamented. I talked to her afterward and she said, 'Oh yes. Very much so.' So I just think that some of the music is linked naturally. And you'll find some of the songs and the tunes in both traditions."

"I think that kind of stuff suits my voice too. And I've always loved yodeling (laughs). I've only recently tried to do it properly. My dad came out of the skiffle era in Glasgow. He knew a bunch of those old American songs so I've been hearing that stuff a lot of my life."

Whenever possible, Dunn tours with her good pal and former Bill Bourne sidekick, fiddler Shannon Johnson. Johnson produced both of Dunn's discs. Financial considerations, however, dictate such live collaborations. And when push comes to shove...

"I'm becoming a stronger guitar player and more confident so that I can do solo shows and not embarrass myself. I did a lot of workshops this past summer on my own because it is very prohibitive to bring other musicians. I'd prefer to do things in a duo setting simply because it takes a little pressure off having to do everything myself. But I'm also prepared to play on my own."

Pastures of Plenty

The Canadian landscape provides much inspiration for Tim Harrison's ballads. Roger Levesque traces the career of this down to earth songwriter.

For decades there has been a deep vein of serious songwriting stretching like a layer of gold through the bedrock of Canadian music. Few of those artists will ever reach the level of notoriety that Joni Mitchell, Leonard Cohen or Gordon Lightfoot enjoy, and the rule remains that you usually have to move somewhere else (ie: south of the border) to make a name for yourself internationally. Still, the songs remain rich and universal in their appeal.

Tubthumping



Tim Harrison

Tim Harrison suggests that talent might be tied to our geography somehow: "Maybe it's that whole Margaret Atwood's notion of survival and how tough it is up here. On some level maybe that prompts us to write about survival and I think a lot of us in Canada work in isolation. I've listened to hours of other people's music, and up here, there are a lot of songwriters doing this phenomenal thing that's not always noticed. But ultimately, all people need and respond to stories, to have a perspective from outside of ourselves."

Harrison should know as well as anyone, given that he's one of Canada's best singer-songwriters, a musical poet still largely unsung in the popular media. Geography might also explain a lot about how his own gift for storytelling in folksongs has been inspired and nourished, just as his involvement in running folk festivals has helped nourish a few other talents.

First of all, there's Owen Sound, Ontario, where Harrison was born 50 years ago. It's a little community that opens out to picturesque Georgian Bay, part of Lake Huron, one of the vast inland seas known as The Great Lakes. It's not by chance that you hear a lot of references to water in his lyrics.

Of course southern Ontario is just a hop from New York's Greenwich Village where the 1960s folk revival was taking root when Harrison was a teenager. And it's a short skip to Canada's maritime provinces and Prince Edward Island where he briefly lived. In another direction, Owen Sound is also about an hour or so from Toronto, where the songsmith started to make a name for himself in the '70s, and it's only a little further to Hamilton where the late Stan Rogers produced Harrison's first album, *Train Going East* at Daniel Lanois' now-famous Grant Avenue studio in 1979.

Finally, summer in southern Ontario is dotted with little folk festivals including the big granddaddy of them all, Mariposa, an event that Harrison attended as a youth, later performed at, and eventually directed for

one difficult year, 1982. He's kept his hand in, organizing or directing a couple of smaller festivals around Owen Sound and the surrounding area since.

But over the past five years, this singer and string-slinger has been focused as never before on writing and recording his own music, all out of the home-studio-office in Toronto's east end that he shares with his wife Lisa. It's the headquarters of their own Second Avenue Records label which released Harrison's last three self-produced albums, *Bridges* (1997), the self-titled *Tim Harrison* (1999), and *Sara And The Sea* (2001): the first to be recorded in his home studio and his sixth album overall: all available via Festival Distribution in Canada.

During that time he's been gradually expanding his schedule of solo performances too, across Canada, into the United States, and finally overseas to Britain in 1999. Another disc is also due in early 2002. To be titled *Wheatfield With Crows*, it's actually a whole new re-recording of his 1995 tape album, *The Stars Above*, with some new material and enhanced production.

Harrison calls himself a "scraps of paper kind of songwriter" who pieces his tunes together from fragments of melody and sentences. His inspiration takes a roughly fifty-fifty split between personal experience and more journalistic observations, and he underlines he's not a political songwriter, though.

"I have written songs that show my political stripes. But in the end (he laughs), sex, death and whatever are still the great themes of poetry."

The last album, *Sara And The Sea*, also reverberates with feelings of loss in several songs, one to mark the death of a good friend, others depicting severed romance, and there's even a cover of Phil Ochs' quirky *When I'm Gone*. Harrison likes to pay tribute to his folk forebears by covering somebody once on each album.

His words resonate with down to earth sincerity but beyond any specific theme the most compelling part to

Harrison's art comes in the way he uses imagery and metaphor to translate timeless experience. In performance it conjures atmospheres that are often haunting or at least thought-provoking.

While he's adept on various guitars, piano, mandola and more, Harrison the musician stuck with guitars and vocal on the album, filling things out with the help of Paul Mills' mandolin, violinist Zeke Mazurek, and bassist Dennis Pendrith. Chris Whiteley dropped by to play a bit of harmonica too, but the overall effect is one of intimate, heartfelt music making.

Harrison was seven years old when he began piano lessons at the bidding of his musical father and amongst the songwriter's influences there was an element of traditional folk music that came through with a bit of Irish ancestry.

"Song circles came pretty early in life. My family used to vacation on a boat and we would travel around Georgian Bay. Wherever we went there would be this collection of people who would inevitably have a corn-roast on the dock and everyone would sit around and sing. I became part of that as a kid."

He really started writing tunes after switching to the guitar at 11, and credits his inspiration in part to a couple of older brothers who were already picking up on Bob Dylan and the new songwriters of the day. Seeing a Gordon Lightfoot show at age 15 made his mind up on music, but the idea of a musical career was apparently "a contentious issue" at home.

"The whole hippie thing was pretty attractive at the time and the music drove the whole movement to some degree. Everyone was listening to songwriter music and it was a natural age to be finding out what you were all about."

By high school he was also taken with some of the rhythm 'n' blues dance bands that operated in southern Ontario, like David Clayton-Thomas. After leaving home at 19 and building a log cabin in P.E.I., he eventually returned, moving to Toronto around 1972. A couple of years later a first, failed recording attempt left him with a little studio experience.

In 1976, Harrison took time to co-found an Owen Sound festival with his older brother John, and some of the up-and-coming artists he connected with - Stan and Garnet Rogers, David Essig and Kim Deschamps - would wind up helping on his debut record *Train Going East* in 1979. But by then, at the height of the disco era, things were not very friendly to folk music. He dubs the electric, band-oriented music he wound up doing in the early '80s as "folk 'n' roll".

Eventually he quit that, returning to his own songs in 1985, but after 1990 with the birth of his son Noah Harrison's music had to co-exist with his new role as a stay-at-home dad. It wasn't until 1995 that he was able to turn to a more frequent recording and performing life again and he's put time into developing some impressive guitar skills along the way.

Talking to him today, Harrison sounds as dedicated as ever to the cause of relating a story in song:

"It's just natural thing that these songs carry on. Maybe the only un-natural thing about it is that since folklorists like Allan Lomax and people like that started travelling around and preserving this music it's built a greater awareness of cultural roots, and it's likely that people will treat this art form with a greater amount of respect."

Tubthumping

Community Service

The Calgary Folk Club currently hosts its 30th anniversary season. A misty-eyed Les Siemieniuk supplies the history lesson, class.

Johnny Worrall, The Wild Colonial Boys' lead singer, steps up to the microphone and sings that song — just as he has done every second Friday at 8 p.m., from September to April, for the past 30 years.

As he launches into the chorus — "And it's no, nay, never" — once again, on cue, as they have done for the last 30 years, the full house responds with *The Wild Rover's* mandatory, clap, clap, clap.

Another night at the Calgary Folk Club is officially under way. After a 45-minute set by the Boys, and a break for beer and sausage rolls, Garnet Rogers takes the stage. He is not exactly sure, but he has played this club at least a dozen times over the years, both as a solo act and with his late brother Stan. The 30th season largely consists of audience favourites from the past.

It's hard to imagine this local music community was ever without the Calgary Folk Club. But in 1972, a wave of immigration brought Welshman, Mansel Davies, and his wife, Anne, from Birmingham, England, to teach in Calgary. Mansel, a guitarist and bass player, had toured with the likes of The Corries and The Ian Campbell Group around Europe. Davies was soon teaching guitar for Calgary Adult Education. He also hooked up with local lawyer and bass player John Martland and Sheffield native Johnny Worrall.

Together they formed The Wild Colonial Boys.

But where to play? In 1972, Calgary really was a cowtown, not the big sophisticated Cow City it has become. Besides the ski hills, the music venues were few and far between. In Birmingham, Davies, with Ian Campbell, was heavily involved in The Jug O' Punch, a famous folk club there. "It was a great part of our social and Mansel's professional life," says Anne. "He played there all the time."

One of the good things about being immigrants in the Promised Land, anything was possible. So they started their own club modeled on the Jug O' Punch. The Wild Colonial Boys became the house band and now had a regular place to play.

Drawing from a built in audience of guitar students and teachers, the doors opened in September of 1972. "The Boys thought of it as a one of. We didn't think it would last," says Mansel.

The initial hall was a log cabin owned by the Calgary Sports Car Club, featuring a septic field into which five gallon buckets from the washrooms had to be emptied throughout the night because there was no running water.

"Usually, the men just went outside in the snow and some couldn't be trusted to carry the buckets all the way to the proper spot for dumping," says Anne.

Beer service and non-North American bathroom standards not-with-standing, the place was packed and necessitated a move to a larger hall very shortly. Three moves later, the club's current home, the Dalhousie Community Center, continues to sell out its 400 seats on a regular basis.

Initially, Calgary musicians were booked. Mansel and Anne then looked to Edmonton and surrounding areas for their performers. As the club grew and prospered, Anne says, they realized they could actually book anyone they wanted from anywhere. So they did.

Garnet Rogers played the folk club first with Stan in the late '70s. At the time, he remembers, "They paid you well. They gave you \$500 dollars, which was a lot at the time and helped you set up other gigs in and around Calgary so you could afford to come out (West). And they treated you well. You got a sound check, a decent place to stay, that was rare then."

Garnet reckons musicians playing the independent music scene owe a lot to the Calgary Folk Club.

Besides being an exceptional place to play, it is also a good place to listen to music. There is no bar service during performances so the focus remains on the music. And it has grown into a social event. People have sat at the same tables with the same people for years. Some bring their own food and they decorate their tables at Christmas.

And as with most folk clubs, it would cease to exist without the volunteers. It started with the wives and families of the band members, but



Wild Colonial Boys: Mansel Davies second from right

grew in numbers and professionalism. Susan Casey, who now handles the booking, first attended as an audience member in 1978 and started by stacking chairs at the end of the night.

"We've built a community," she says. "It's become more than the music. It's a place like the world should be, when you're here."

Casey, a former schoolteacher, now works professionally in music. She learned her trade at the club.

On a personal note, I arrived in Calgary in 1981 to take a job as a music producer with CBC Radio, which included producing *Simply Folk*, a national folk music program. I was from Winnipeg, home of a great folk festival, and had lived in London England, but I had never seen a year-round folk music scene like the one in Calgary. Over the passing years, the success of the Calgary Folk Club had spawned others: The Rocky Mountain Folk Club, The Nickelodeon, The Saturday Night Special, The Bow Valley Music Club, The Lethbridge Folk Club and The Fort MacLeod Folk Club. There were even two in arch rival Edmonton. All operated on the same format — a community hall, volunteers, a house band, and a featured act. As the producer of a folk music program, I had landed in the best possible place as international folk acts passed through every weekend night on a regular basis. Live recordings from the Calgary folk clubs were an integral part of show's nine-year run.

But all the history and stories aside, the best thing the Calgary Folk Club has done in 30 years is to provide a loving atmosphere for the music to effect the audience. Everyone I talked to researching this story had a magic moment where things rose above the norm because of the performances.

Mansel says of the first time Stan Rogers played the club, "He was so good he was too big for the stage. I'll never forget that night."

Anne was particularly moved by the transformation of Rita MacNeil as she took the stage. "She was a different person than the one I talked to earlier. It was magic." For Susan Casey, Odetta took her to that special place. And once, as a radio producer on the job at the Calgary Folk Club, my engineer and I let the tape run out because we were both so totally mesmerized by June Tabor and Martin Simpson.

And Tom Paxton, after having played the club, wrote them a letter suggesting they write a booklet on how to run a folk club because, in his opinion, it was the best run club he'd ever encountered. The Calgary Folk Club — it's all about the music and it has touched a lot of lives. Here's to thirty more years.

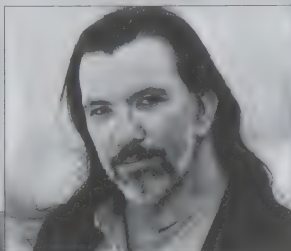


The late Kate Wolf performed at the Calgary Folk Club

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Queltic Commandos

Pioneering Quebec roots ensemble, La Bottine Souriante, celebrate their silver jubilee this year. Our Tony Montague reminisces with foot-percussionist Michel Bordeleau

Ask any informed roots music fan in Europe to name his or her favourite Canadian act and the answer will almost invariably be: La Bottine Souriante. The nonet from the Lanaudière region, to the north of Montreal, has been hailed in *ROOTS*, the U.K.'s leading tradition-based music publication, as "the tightest and most exciting band of any nature anywhere"; and, bolstering that claim, the jury at last year's BBC Folk Awards gave La Bottine the prize for the best live show of 1999.

This summer La Bottine celebrated its 25th anniversary in grand style. During the summer the nine musicians embarked on a major European tour that took in Norway, Switzerland, Denmark, England, Scotland, Spain, Italy and France; they released the album *Cordial*, as brilliant and innovative as any of its ten predecessors; and they organized a special performance at the *Mémoire et Racines* (Memory and Roots) Festival in Lanaudière, that brought together past and present members of La Bottine for a rollicking onstage party.

What a long - and sometimes hard - trip it's been. The origins of La Bottine (which translates as The Smiling Work Boot) are as humble and rural as the name suggests. It all started in the autumn of 1976, just before the provincial election that brought René Lévesque and the separatist Parti Québécois to power. There was an effervescence in Quebec society at the time, a new confidence that prompted many young artists to examine their indigenous cultural roots. In Lanaudière a gaggle of friends and musicians, who had been meeting for jam sessions in a hotel bar on weekends, decided put together a band. Their intent was to explore the province's neglected traditional songs and tunes, which brought together elements of Scottish, Irish, English, and above all French music to create a unique "Queltic" hybrid.

While remaining regionally-based, after little more than a year of playing, La Bottine became successful enough to record its debut album *Y'a Bien Du Changement*. Then came the PQ's defeat in the 1980 sovereignty referendum. In the aftermath everything that smacked of Quebecois rootsiness and folksiness was spurned. La Bottine actually split up, only to reform after a year and put out a second album *Les Epousailles*. It was a tough period, but the musicians of La Bottine soldiered on. Virtually ignored in their home province, they began touring in the rest of Canada and especially in the U.S. and Europe. They also formed their own record label to issue a third album *Chic 'N Swell*.

In the mid '80s there were further major changes. Singer and accordionist Yves Lambert - the last of the founders of La Bottine who's still in the band - began hanging out with local fiddler, mandolin-player, and foot-percussionist Michel Bordeleau.

"We became good friends, and started making music regularly just for fun," recalls the genial Bordeleau. "Yves had a particular attraction for Jewish and Arabic music back then, and together we developed

a repertoire of tunes. Around the same time Yves and a couple of other members of La Bottine started a side project, *Les Nouvelles Sonorités Jolietaines* (LNSJ), to explore other musical styles that interested them but which didn't fit into the framework of La Bottine. Eventually Yves asked me to join LNSJ."

The new formation operated as a kind of research laboratory for La Bottine. Although LNSJ gave only a handful of public performances, they met often to practice and experiment with new ideas. "We were open to anything - blues, jazz, Latin music, songs by Bob Dylan or Gilles Vigneault, whatever took our fancy," says Bordeleau. "It was a musical playground, filled with energy and a spirit of freedom and spontaneity."

Soon afterwards Bordeleau was asked to join La Bottine too. It was the summer of 1987 and within a few weeks this quartet, was making preparations to record its fourth album, *Tout Comme Au Jour De L'an*. So they invited stand-up bassist Réjean Archambault and pianist Denis Fréchette from LNSJ to guest on two or three numbers. In the end, they played on nearly every track.

"In a sense LNSJ took over La Bottine," says Bordeleau. "Réjean and Denis came onboard and at that point the orientation of La Bottine began to change - certainly with respect to our sound. It was the start of a musical adventure."

Fréchette was also involved in a big band, numbering well over a dozen musicians, who performed original music with a Latin jazz flavour. He was used to working with a brass section, and in LNSJ he had already experimented with playing the parts on his keyboards that are usually assigned to horns. La Bottine itself remained committed to traditional music but was increasingly open to new approaches. Fréchette suggested writing the arrangements for two or three Quebecois reels, to include brass instruments.

"So he did that, and one afternoon we decided to hear what it would sound like. Denis contacted four of his horn-playing friends - mostly the same guys who are still with us - and we started to play our music as usual, with the brass joining in."

"After a few numbers we stopped, and everyone looked completely gob-smacked. Yves and I proposed taking a five-minute break and went off to get a case of beer. I remember walking to the corner store and both of us saying that what had happened was something very special, very innovative, something we had to pursue further. So on our next album *Je Voudrais Changer De Chapeau* we had horns on a couple of tracks, and by the time we made *Jusqu'aux Petites Heures* in 1991 the band had acquired a four-piece horn section."

La Bottine was swimming against the musical current of the times, which favoured more compact formations and stripped-down arrangements. Despite warnings from concert promoters that to have a large band performing traditional music was to court disaster, the headstrong lads from Lanaudière pressed on.

Incredibly, whereas the band was well-known in the rest of Quebec, La Bottine had never played in Montreal - and as a consequence had been largely ignored by the province's mainstream media.

"Now that we were really taking charge of our career we decided that situation had to end. No one would produce a concert for us in Montreal - they all thought it was too risky - so we decided to do it ourselves. Even then, the owner of the venue we found didn't want to rent to us. He said our venture would never work," recalls Bordeleau, with a laugh.

In the end La Bottine persuaded the proprietor of Club Soda to relent - and the show sold out all three nights of its run. Montreal's media duly took note of the phenomenon of city sophisticates going ape over a bunch of musicians playing traditional music from the



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countryside. A year later the band rented the same space for seven nights, and once again every performance sold out.

Perhaps even more remarkable was the fact that the concerts took place during the midwinter holiday season. Unwittingly, La Bottine altered Montreal's social and commercial conventions for the Xmas period.

"Normally all theatres and other venues closed at that time - the only shows around were *The Icecapades* and *The Nutcracker*. For the third year, we rented *Le Spectrum* [a much larger space than *Club Soda*] and played to almost-full houses on 12 consecutive nights. The Xmas gigs in Montreal have become a tradition for us, and - seeing our success - other venues have stayed open for business during the holidays."

La Bottine was on a roll - and, like a runaway snowball, the band hasn't stopped gathering pace, and growing in popularity at home and abroad. Jusqu'aux Petites Heures garnered both a Juno Award and a Félix Award (the Juno's Quebec equivalent) in 1992. La Mistrine - which went platinum - repeated the trick in 1995. *En Spectacle* celebrated the band's 20th anniversary with a brilliant live concert recording, and 1998's *Xième* brought another clutch of Félixes.

It would be tedious to list all the prizes that La Bottine has walked away with. Suffice to say they've sold in excess of half a million albums, and find themselves in a class of their own. In 1993 the band created a company, *Mille Pattes*, with the aim of promoting tradition-based music in Quebec through recordings and concerts. In addition to La Bottine, *Mille Pattes'* stable of artists that includes Michel Faubert, Les Charbonniers de l'Enfer (of which Bordeleau and Faubert are members), Yves Lambert (for his solo projects), Daniel Roy, Entourloupe, and the trio Marchand-



Ornstein-Miron.

For many years the percussion for La Bottine was provided by Bordeleau's indefatigable feet alone. Then in the mid-90s, the band started inviting guest percussionists to sit in with them.

"We never abandoned my feet - fortunately! - we just wanted to try out other rhythms with Cuban or Irish percussionists and the like. But we came to the conclusion that it would be better for us to play all the instruments ourselves, in order to stay closer to our original musical ideas.

"For that reason on recent albums, and on *Cordial* in particular, a number of us have worked on the percussion. André Brunet, our fiddler plays bongos and djembe; Jean Fréchette, our saxophonist and musical director, also plays djembe and a number of other things; I play the snare-drum; and Yves Lambert plays spoons. La Bottine has always been a band in which

the ability to play a number of instruments has been valued - it really allows us to vary our arrangements."

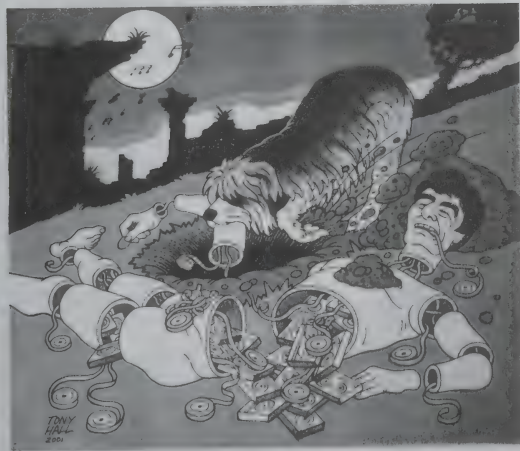
Bordeleau sees the increasing use of percussion as a significant new development for La Bottine and, by extension, for Quebecois folk music in general.

"It's not so much an exploration of jazz or Latin rhythms - what we're trying to do is to integrate another element into our traditional music without it sounding like a loan from other styles and genres. It's part of the band's general outlook - we're always seeking to innovate, and to bring out all the elements inherent in traditional music with the aim of making it accessible to everyone. The music has a force and an energy equal to anything else that's out there - period."

Nobody who's witnessed the scenes of joyful madness that attend a concert by La Bottine Souriante would consider disputing Bordeleau's statement.

Nic Jones

Nic Jones Unearthed



Unearthed

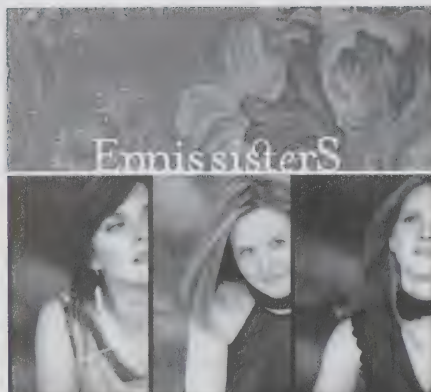
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Love and hate and birds and ponies propel the new Garnet Rogers recording. Oh yes, and, erm... arson. Roddy Campbell fans the flames.

The advance copy of *Firefly* takes flight. Around the room the imploring strength of Garnet Rogers' ornate baritone ebbs and flows on a groundswell of raw emotion. But then again, it always does, doesn't it.

Solitude and desolation cast long shadows over this new disc. Desperation and anger too. Yet, its underlying theme is one of celebration. Twenty years married last spring, Rogers counts his blessings with several catholic tributes to his lovely wife Gail. The most obvious include the rockabilly, *Where'd You Get That Little Red Dress?*, and the warm, nostalgic title track. Clearly, he is still head-over-heels. So grab a hanky and read on, dear reader.

"This is the thing that pretty much forms every waking moment of my life — this relationship, this marriage — having this person, this great, great love," says Rogers. "Everyone dreams of having a great love. We're born with that need. We're born with that condition."

We've just had 20 years of exceptional friendship and companionship and it's been an extraordinary run that Gail and I have had. This is really an extraordinary thing. Gail and I have been together simply because there's no one in the world I'd rather be with, or talk to, or spend time with. I've been amazingly blessed that way."

We will get to his thoughts on Ontario premier, Mike Harris a little later.

For someone who frequently gives the outward impression of a gruff, loner, at odds with all asunder, Garnet Rogers is obviously a disarmingly open, sensitive foot soldier. He also thinks deeply about his music, constantly questioning and broadening writing profoundly inspired by the folk tradition.

Firefly offers further ample evidence of his creative capers as he dabbles with trumpets, a cello bought in a pawn shop in Fargo, North Dakota, and the odd orchestral arrangement. Furthermore, his songs continue to grow in length and strength with the majority clocking in somewhere between six and ten minutes. Considering his whole main stage set at last summer's Calgary folk festival consisted of a sole rendition of his epic environmental clarion, *Stormfront*, from *Sparrow's Wing*, something surely gives.

Mr. Rogers: "There's a sort of moment of clarity I had a few years ago where I realized commercial radio for me is a dead issue. It's not going to happen. I don't fit anyone's format. And that was tremendously freeing. It was just like, 'Well screw it. I can do whatever I want. I don't have to worry about format and all that crap. Or, 'Where's the single? Or any of that stuff."

"I've always loved longer pieces where there's a little bit of orchestration. I think the first long one I did was a *Row Of Small Trees* on *From A High Window*. I don't want to sound pretentious, if you're a songwriter

and say you're heavily influenced by classical music, but you know I am. I'm a string player and I listen to a lot of orchestral music. So I like to put these instrumental passages in and they tend to pad the song out a lot."

"I like to build a long piece and try and paint a picture and create moods. I like being free to tell long stories. There's also my background in traditional music, you know. Somebody sits there for three hours and sings you every verse of *Tam Lin*. And that's perfectly acceptable for some people."

Despite the ever-increasing length of his songs, his vivid, frequently moving, lyrical elegance remains astutely spare and economical. Both his last disc, *Sparrow's Wing*, and *Firefly* offer compelling, panoramic lyrical landscapes.

His obvious ardent appreciation for nature he attributes to a childhood frequently spent alone walking in woods near the family home. And, of course, there is also the numerous solitary hours crisscrossing and contemplating rural North America. The uplifting *Better Days*, the joyful celebration of spring, *Redwing*, and the somber, existentialism of *Blue Smoke* are all placed in pictorial rustic settings.

"Blue Smoke, that's a continuance of a song I wrote for *High Windows* called *The Last Of The Working Stetsons*, about a guy just trying to deal with a drought. In my mind his place is located up in the hills towards Turner Valley (Alberta). Of course, that's all covered in housing developments now. In the first song, he went to the city to try and find work and that didn't pan out and he went back to the farm. He had nothing else to do. He's going to have another go at it."

"In *Blue Smoke*, it's seriously gone bad. He's just sitting there and when he throws the cigarette off the front porch, it starts a little fire. He's at that low ebb; he's watching the fire grow and he can't be bothered. He's really got his back to the wall. He's got nowhere to go so it's all the same to him. It's just this poor fictional character I'm torturing. I'm worried about him in the next song."

Like his late, much revered brother Stan, Garnet Rogers drew much of his early inspiration from the British tradition, particularly its story-telling balladry. Instrumentally, particular influences included the guitar playing and open tunings of Nic Jones and Archie Fisher.

The Toronto based informal folk music collective, Friends of Fiddlers Green, also had a profound impact on the brothers. "They were a group of people who showed us we could write in a traditional mode, songs that harken back to an older style of writing — the old ballad style." Briefly returning to that innocent era, *Firefly* offers a surprisingly appealing rendition of Ralph McTell's *Girl From The Hiring Fair*.

"I used to know 20 of his songs back in the '70s. I just loved his writing. And then I did a couple of shows with him a couple of years ago. There was a lot of trepidation and I thought, 'What if he's an ass-hole?' I'm just dreading meeting this guy because this could be just awful."



Garnet Rogers

And it turned out he's just the nicest guy, no ego to him at all. He was so friendly and gracious to me. That was just a wonderful thing it made all the songs come alive for me again. It was like, 'Wow!' And then I heard *Girl From The Hiring Fair* a couple of years ago and it kind of made me swoon. I thought it was a beautiful story. I wanted to be able to play it every night."

And in keeping, with the social and political content firmly ensconced in the folk tradition, *Firefly* features *Underpass* — a critical look at the human cost of Ontario premier Mike Harris's conservative policies aimed at reducing welfare lines. It's a powerful, dire barn burner more befitting Dire Straits in structure.

"Mike Harris, there's nobody I hate more than him. He and all of his buddies, who are basically running corporate Ontario, they took 50,000 people of the welfare rolls in Toronto his first year in power. And everybody's going, 'Oh yeah, that's wonderful.' And in Toronto people are living on hot air grates. Not in any of the worst cities in America have I seen so many homeless people. I hate Mike Harris and everything he stands for."

"It's that smug, 'All we've got to do is pull yourself up by the boot straps.' Fuck it, some of us don't even have fucking boots, you know. We don't have a fucking chance. And it's that sneering kind of, 'Well if you only just applied yourself.' This guy has had every break in life and he played golf for a living, for god sakes. What does he know about real life?"

Rogers' vitriol turns bluer and bluer but eventually ends in peels of uninhibited laughter. None of his comments, of course, could possibly be repeated in print. Pity.

And so to the rockabilly, *Where Did You Get That Little Red Dress?*, a song so totally out of character it clearly demands further investigation.

"That was one that came from the marriage," he

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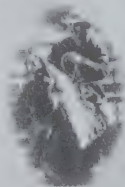
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laughs. "I was playing in Portland, Oregon, opening for Greg Brown. I was driving up to the Aladdin Theater, which holds the world's record for the most consecutive showings of Deep Throat. It was a kind of wild old place, a lovely venue now. They've cleaned the floor of. But anyway, I was driving along and thinking of home, and it was kind of, 'Where did you get that red dress?'. It was a sort of boom-chuck-a-boom-chuck rhythm I had in my head. By the time we got to the sound check the song was there.

So I was playing it in the dressing room and writing it down and Greg was sitting there listening to the words smiling. I finished the song. And he said, 'My God how long have you been on the road?' It was just a bit of fun."

Blue smoke across the stubble field, River running slow, Charlie watched the moon rise, Fat and pale, an hour ago, He heard the distant call of geese, In the faintly glowing west, Circling low and falling fast, In the distant fields to rest.

- The opening verse of *Blue Smoke*, By Garnet Rogers

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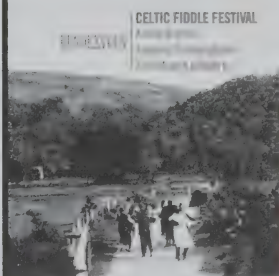
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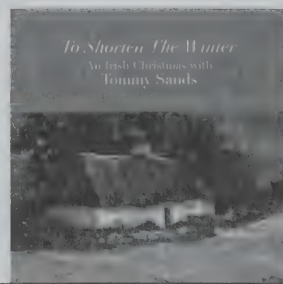


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The Waifs

Waifaring Strangers

The idea of videos just does not fly with The Waifs. Nor have they ever sent a CD to a record company looking for a deal. Fiercely independent, they conquered Canada in a matter of months. World domination beckons figures Roddy Campbell, Holiday snaps: Frank Gasparik.

They flew from Western Australia to Western Canada for a weekend in the middle of February. Brave hearts. They played several impromptu gigs in a hotel bedroom and one at the local Portuguese club, then returned home.

But by the end of September, The Waifs had performed at all the major folk festivals in North America, several in Europe, headlined their own successful concert tour of Canada, and hob-nobbed with the likes of Woody Allen, Spike Lee and Keith Richards at Madison Square Gardens.

Vancouver, that blustery February weekend, hosted the 2001 conference of The North American Folk Alliance — an organization pledged to support and encourage new grassroots folk music. With the Waifs — sisters Donna and Vikki Simpson and Josh Cunningham — it hit the jackpot.

Donna: "It's funny, at the time, I didn't feel we did great showcases. I thought, 'We can't perform in a bedroom.' We had to perform in hotel rooms and people like festival directors would come in and lie down on the beds and sit on the floor and we would have to stand up an introduce ourselves. At the time, I remember feeling really uncomfortable thinking, 'Oh my god,

nothing is going to come of this at all.'"

Vikki: "It basically leapfrogged us because if we had come just off our own backs we'd start in clubs, very small, and try to work it up. And what we've built out of six months might have taken us three or four years to gain the same sort of exposure that we've been given at these festivals. We're touring across Canada headlining our own shows. I think that's incredible for an unknown band to come at the beginning of the year."

Nine years of committed independence and an unshakable belief in themselves had finally come up trumps. Their timing was perfect. They had just made *Sink Or Swim* — a quantum leap in terms of substance and content over their admirable previous two discs, *The Waifs* (1996) and *Sbelter Me* (1998). And they had also evolved into a vacuum tight quartet with the addition of percussionist Dave Macdonald. The Waifs truly enjoy performing live, with the superb acoustic guitar playing of Josh constantly cajoling and encouraging the sisters. They sold a record 1,000 discs in essentially two days at the recent Edmonton folk festival and 750 in Calgary. Proof of the pudding, as they say in culinary circles.

Life as Waifs began for Donna and Vikki Simpson in the small, isolated Australian coastal town of Albany, a five-hour car ride from the nearest city, Perth.

Donna: "We grew up on a fishing camp. Our family had become, in part, gypsies. There was three or four families and we had to live on a beach. We had a 12 kilometer stretch of salmon beach and every night we had barbecues and dad would play the guitar. There was always a bit of music around, you know. That's

where I learned to play the guitar. It was only two or three chord stuff. After that I fell in love with folk music, Bob Dylan, Neil Young. . ."

Vikki: "Albany is the sort of place you leave school, you get a job, you get pregnant. We couldn't afford to go to university. It was sort of town where if you saw a car coming from another state with a different number plate you'd look at them and go, 'Wow, they're travelling.' I would. I'd want to meet these people."

Donna: "We knew we both had to get out. We both had serious boyfriends, and dogs, and everything was okay, but I knew there had to be more to my life instead of standing still."

Already playing gigs around town, they left Albany in an old Campervan in February, 1992, toured Australia for six months as the acoustic duo, Colours, and in a hotel in Broome, met up with Josh Cunningham. At the time, Josh was playing in a blues-rock cover band and in dire need of a shower.

"We were playing in the same pub on the same night," he says. "They had flash hotel rooms and the band I was in was in the dongs out the back. We didn't have a shower and they were kind enough to let us use theirs. When I got out of the shower, I picked up the acoustic guitar and started jamming along. And Donna asked pretty much straight away, 'Do you want to join up with us?', before she consulted Vikki who was horrified."

They were still teenagers. And that first encounter is now documented in the brilliant, *A Brief History on Sink Or Swim*. For the next three years, they virtually lived in their Campervan as they traveled around

Australia managing and booking themselves into such venues as a Hells Angels den in Darwin, where they performed between strippers and cat fights. But gradually they built up a following, particularly in Western Australia. And with the help of Jen Anderson and Michael Thomas of Weddings Parties Anything as producers, they recorded *The Waifs* in 1996 in Melbourne.

Josh: "Just from asking around the studios which were in our price range, their names kept popping up. And because they were out of a band that had quite a profile, it was a good step for us. They actually ended up opening up for us at our initial CD release so we got a crowd. They were just great people to work with because they were enthusiastic about the music. They were wonderful musicians as well and had a lot of experience in the studio which was really good thing for a young band.

"We'd just been a bunch of young kids on the road having adventures. So we were writing songs about those kind of themes. It was our first recording experience so it has this fresh young sound to it. A little bit naïve in a way technically, but I think that first album captured something of that beautiful exuberance we had back in those days. Apparently, we still have it."

For sure, their debut was a solid stepping stone that featured a trio of standout cuts: *Gillian*, still a live staple; *Billy Jones*, a humorous and occasionally touching tale of a transvestite; and *Waif Song*, a mischievous, this-is-who-we-are-like-it-or-lump-it talkin' blues. "Mother nature keeps me safe even when I'm off my face," they gleefully sing. Ah yes, the innocence of youth. Incidentally, it's the only song all three of them wrote together.

Shelter Me followed in 1998 and truly marks the emergence of Josh Cunningham as a guitarist of exceptional ability, equally comfortable in a jazz, blues or folk format. While the new songs grew appealingly more sophisticated, the lyrics, while well-meaning, became increasingly introspective and frequently darker despite lines like, "You fell in love with her because she was the first girl you'd seen throw a cricket ball" (*Lest We Forget*). That, and the jazzed up hidden track,

a live, enthusiastic re-working of *Billy Jones*. Whatever, the sleeve notes said it all: "This is proudly an independent release."

Donna: "It's important to us. Luckily, it happened out of necessity. I see it as a blessing in disguise now because I really appreciate the position we're in. When I think about it, I'm really quite proud of where we got ourselves to because it comes out of hard work. More than that, being an independent goes part and parcel connecting with an audience. I love singing songs for them and about them. Doing everything on a grass roots level, it feels natural, it feels normal. Things like making a video clip, that sort of stuff just doesn't fly in our world. It should be said we have never sent a CD to a record company asking for a deal. It just wasn't an issue for us."

After an extended break from each other, they were at it again two years later. And this time around, they got it right on all counts. *Sink Or Swim* sparkles with mischief, humor, and edge throughout. To wit, *The Haircut*:

*So now when I make love I make love to myself
I got no disease so it's good for my health
I got my hands in my pants - down my Calvin Kleins
I don't need you no more baby I can come every time.*

Eat your heart out Ani DiFranco. And yeah, that one goes down well live.

There's a refreshing pop savvy at play here too set amidst a thrilling extravaganza of acoustic blues, country swing, township jive... and a partridge in a frigging pear tree, mate. Original as they are vital, Donna and Vikki's harmonies are seamless, their singing astute, boisterous and even grappingly deadpan. And then there's the anchor: yer man Cunningham, in dazzling form on all fronts. Hard to believe his initial influence was a Canadian actor.

Josh: "The reason I started playing in the first place was Michael J. Fox. When I was 13 I saw that movie *Back To The Future*. When he gets up at the high school prom and plays *Johnny Be Goode* and rocks out, I thought, 'Wow! That's exactly what I want to do.' I found the old acoustic guitar that had been lying

around the home for years and that's how I got started. But as far as influences go I haven't absorbed myself in any particular artist or style. It's just a mixture of everything you hear. Sometime things just stick and you take them on board and go from there.

"It wasn't until I met Donna and Vikki that I started listening to folk music, people like Bob Dylan and James Taylor and that singer songwriter kind of stuff. I saw them playing that kind of music and thought wow, that's what I want to do. And as fortune would have it we ended up joining with each other."

Sink Or Swim rightfully elevated The Waifs beyond cult status on the home front. So much so that Luke Connelly the Australian basketball player who plays for the New York Knicks came to their gig in the Big Apple.

"He's a Waifs fan," says Josh, "and he asked if we wanted to go see him play against Toronto, actually. So we went Madison Square Gardens. We had his personal guest seats and we were two rows back from the edge of the court. Woody Allen was across the way. Spike Lee was in front of us. Keith Richards six seats down."

Having spent the last six months criss-crossing North America and Europe, playing such major folk festivals as Edmonton, Newport, Tønder and the Edinburgh Fringe, they headed back to Australia with thoughts of a live record and more touring. World domination surely beckons. Rest and laurels, it appears, do not exist in their vocabulary.

Donna: "We do we do work very hard but we love it. We're pretty good travelers, if I can say that. We're good at touring."

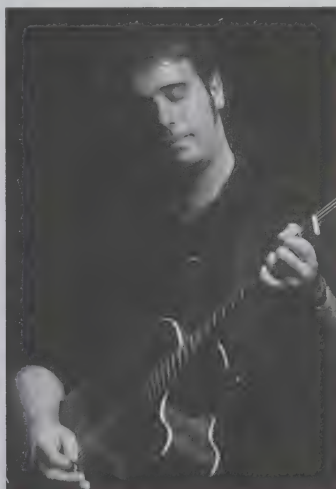
Josh: "I think it's just an integral part of what we've done. We met up on the road and we've been on the road ever since. Plus it's just another necessary thing you've got to do if you want to get anywhere in the business. We're also having a lot of fun going to new places, meeting lots of great people and playing these wonderful festivals."

"Vikki: It might be harder for us to actually stay in one place than it is to travel. I always think at the end of this I won't ever be able to settle down because I never spent more than six months in one place."

All Waifs photos courtesy of Frank Gasparik



Vikki



Josh



Donna

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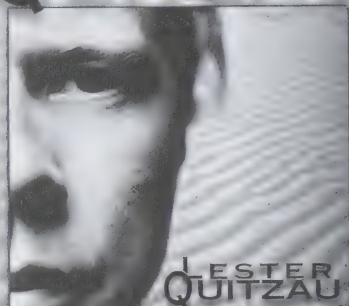
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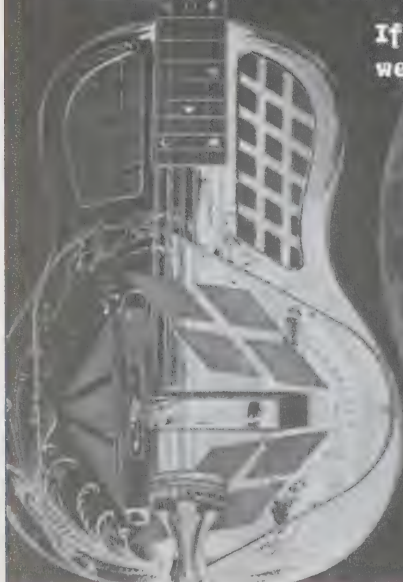
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Miss Americana

The queen of bare-bones roots music co-produced the *O' Brother Where Art Thou?* soundtrack. It sold three million copies. Gillian Welch's latest release, *Time (The Revelator)* proves a haunting, challenging, dark disc full of unforgettable characters. Bob Remington discovers she really wants to sing rock 'n' roll.

Gillian Welch's house, like her music, is uncluttered. No sticky notes on the fridge with a lyric here, an idea there; no piles of paper with scrawled song ideas. Yet, like most great songwriters, she has a system.

There has to be. When you're a writing machine like Welch, you stay organized. The characters on her latest album, *Time (The Revelator)*, didn't just come of thin air - they are the product of two years of people, places, events and thoughts from the doyen of Americana music, or New Century Appalachian, or whatever it is you want to label Welch's music.

"I try to keep my house really spartan," says Welch, on the phone from her home in Nashville. "There's not a lot of verbiage floating around the house. I keep notebooks and there are a lot of snippets on cassette tapes and CDs and what not."

Despite this, her third album in five years, and a catalogue of material that has made her one of the most acclaimed American songwriters of her generation, she disagrees that she is prolific.

"To be honest, I take a more negative view of my work than any one else," says the author of the oft-covered *Orphan Girl* and more than 30 other recorded originals. "I'd be inclined to say I don't write nearly as much as I should. I thought we finished this album with not a song to spare, but then I went back and looked at the archives and that's not true. I just started looking around to see what's next, what's the next record I want to make. So I started going through the notebooks and through the CDs and there's about three more albums worth of stuff. I actually generate more stuff than I think I do. I just don't always finish it."

"I never would have predicted that my first associate producership would be a three million-selling album."

Welch has never written music intended for mass consumption. On *Everything Is Free* on the new album, she says: "Someone hit the big score, they figured it out. But we're gonna do it anyway, even if it doesn't pay." She and songwriting partner David Rawlings don't write accessible ditties. The subjects are often bleak, done to the tempo of sap dripping from a tree. *Time (The Revelator)* demands even more of the listener than her previous *Revival and Hell Among the Yearlings*. "If it's something that you wanna hear, you can sing it yourself," she writes in *Everything Is Free*. "No one's gotta listen to the words in my head."

But people do listen, big time. "I never really would have predicted where I am now, you know?" says Welch. "I never would have predicted that my first associate producership would be a three million selling album." She says she was totally unprepared, in fact, for the reaction to her music.

Early in 1996, at a music festival in Knoxville, Tenn., Welch was asleep in the loft of a church when she heard a group of girls on the floor below her singing *Orphan Girl*.

"I flipped out. It was literally the week before our first album came out and I couldn't figure out how these girls already knew it, and then I realize they probably learned it from Tim and Molly O'Brien, who had released *Orphan Girl* two years before I did."

Today, it is almost routine to hear a Gillian Welch tune in the repertoire of any one of dozens of bluegrass bands or folk groups, or hear one of songs done in any gathering of musicians who gather for a jam.

"That's one of the most flattering things anyone can do. That, for no good reason except they want to, they play one of your songs. That's about the highest praise anyone can give me. Over the last year or two the endorsement or accolade that moves me the most is that some of these songs that I made up have actually entered the world in a real live way. They are really out there. People know them."

On *Time (The Revelator)*, there is less of such material to enter the roots music mainstream. *I Dream a Highway*, at nearly 15 minutes, isn't exactly a campfire song. Broken into two parts are the thematically linked *April the 14th (Part 1)* and *Ruin and Day (Part 2)*, totaling almost eight minutes. There is, however, a haun-

ting quality to the album that draws the listener back to unforgettable characters, like those in *April the 14th*.

"It was a five-band bill, two dollar show. Saw the van out in front from Idaho. And a girl passed out in the back seat trash. There was no way they'd make even half a tank of gas. They look sick and stoned and strangely dressed, and no one showed from the local press."

Three songs from the album, *Elvis Presley Blues*, *My First Lover* and *I Want To Sing That Rock and Roll*, will get video treatment, a first for Welch.

"I was always fairly opposed to it because most of the time they just seem like commercials and I just don't care, you know. And I hate the idea of lip-synching. We've always said from the very beginning that if you want to film us actually singing the song, actually recording the song, great, then it's a real live film piece, and that's what we did this time."

Elvis Presley Blues and *My First Lover* were shot in 16mm black-and-white in an alternate take from what was recorded on the album. "It's us just sitting there, playing. It's how we record," said Welch. *I Want To Sing That Rock and Roll* comes from live concert footage at Nashville's historic Ryman Auditorium. *Elvis Presley Blues* contains some incidental footage, but nothing of the King himself. "I think you automatically get sued. I think there's an automatic sue button."

But does Gillian Welch, queen of bare-bones roots music, really want to sing that rock 'n' roll?

"Sure! Every day," enthuses Welch, who grew up in L.A. In *My First Lover* she frails the banjo and sings about getting drunk and falling in love "at a surfer party" to a Steve Miller song.

"This is a little tiny rock album. It's like a duet rock album. We're a really tiny band but what's to say that we're more or less of a rock band or a bluegrass band? We're just as much a rock band as we are a bluegrass band. We don't play with bluegrass instruments. We don't play with rock instruments so you can call it whatever you want."

My First Lover is one of the many dreamy ruminations on *Time (The Revelator)*, many of which are repeated or connected in the material.

"It's just the stuff that I've been thinking about the last couple of years. It's funny how a number of these sort of places and events and people that I was thinking about they all ended up connected. Every idea sort of infected the other idea and by the end they were all connected. And then the entire album sort of turned back on itself in *Dream a Highway* (the 15-minute last cut). It's like that whole song was about the album, which is very strange. I wouldn't have it any other way. You make albums because that's what you feel like working on at the time. These are the kinds of sounds we felt like making."

Gillian Welch



Long John Baldry

Remembering Leadbelly

Long John Baldry grew up amidst the bleak austerity of post World War II Britain and went on to become a lynchpin in the thriving electric blues scene there in the early '60s that produced the likes of The Rolling Stones, Fleetwood Mac and Baldry discoveries, Rod Stewart and Elton John. But Baldry started out as a folksinger with a repertoire that leaned towards the then largely unknown American acoustic blues of Big Bill Broonzy and, in particular, Huddie Ledbetter — known to one and all as Leadbelly. In remembrance of the 50th anniversary of Leadbelly's death, December 5, 1949, Baldry began a tribute to his mentor and finally released the wonderful *Remembering Leadbelly* this autumn. This interview deals with the formative years of Baldry's career. Questions by Roddy Campbell.

Penguin Eggs: What was it about Leadbelly's music that struck you initially?

Long John Baldry: To us in England it was something totally alien, so different from anything we'd ever heard before. I mean, up to that point the level of popular music in England was *How Much Is That Doggy In The Window?* and other novelty items, *Mairzy Doats* and dozy doats and little lamzy divey. Remember all those things from the postwar years? (Erm, actually, no.) They were just awful songs. But the first time I heard Bill Broonzy and Leadbelly was in 1953. Leadbelly was dead for three years at that point but Bill

was still touring, Europe and England. The Weavers and *Goodnight Irene* in 1950 was a huge hit all over the world. But there was no evidence the song came from Huddie Ledbetter.

The thing about Leadbelly was his songs were as much of the folk tradition as blues. Were you interested in folk music?

Well that was how I started out. I didn't get involved in bands until very much later in the '50s when I was doing guest spots with people like Humphrey Lyttelton, Chris Barber and Acker Bilk. folk like that. Then of course '62 rolled around and it was the start of Blues Incorporated with Alexis (Korner) and Cyril (Davies) whom I had known for five years. When I first hung out with Alexis and Cyril it was very much acoustic. Cyril in fact didn't play any harmonica back then it was mainly 12-string guitar. He was one of the few people in England who played 12-string. There was, of course, Rory McEwan, who was a wonderful, wonderful player. John Hasted, I think he was possibly the first man in England to play a 12-string guitar. I got my first one in '58, which was the first guitar Tony Zemaitis made, who, of course, makes custom guitars for Eric Clapton and Keith Richards and Ronnie Woods and a host of others for hundreds of thousands of pounds. But the very first guitar he made was a 12-string for me. £15 he charged me, which probably didn't even cover his cost of materials even back in '58.

Was Leadbelly the reason you picked up the 12-string?

Yes. I'd been doing Leadbelly tunes mixed in with

Bill Broonzy songs, but it had never sounded quite right on the six-string. It's funny his music, the primitive groove to it, lends itself much more to the ringing open-chord sound of 12-string guitars.

Were you involved with Ewan MacColl's Ballads and Blues Club at the Princess Louise? (Britain's first ever folk club).

Oh yes. It was my first experience of the whole hootenanny-ceildh kind of thing because Ewan would book the weirdest combination of people every Saturday night. Everyone would sit on chairs on this long stage. There was no microphones so you relied on the room's natural acoustics. The audience would sit on the floor. Everyone would do round-robin — a couple of songs from Ramblin' Jack Elliott and Derroll Adams, then a couple of songs from Peggy (Seeger) and Ewan. And then a couple of songs from Judith Silvo who was an Israeli singer. And of course Dominic Behan was frequently there and Seamus Ennis, an incredible uilleann pipe. That's only scratching the surface. I was booked there many, many times. It was the most ironic thing, because Ewan frowned on British people doing anything other than British stuff. But for some reason he liked me and allowed me to come and sing American folk music and especially the blues. We still maintained our relationship and friendship long after the Ballads and Blues thing finished. The very last time I saw Ewan was when he was up for a Grammy for *The First Time I Ever Saw Your Face* because of the Roberta Flack version. I said, 'Are you going over there, Ewan, to collect your Grammy?' And he said, 'I don't think it's going to bring me any more dough. What's the point. If there was more dough, I'd go.'

I take it Lonnie Donegan's version of *Rock Island Line* was your introduction to Leadbelly?

Yes, yes. But the day after I got it my next door neighbor but one, Graham Oliver Bradbury, who became a well known painter in England and breeder of race horses, he said, 'Aha, you like that but come and listen to this. And it was Leadbelly's version of *Rock Island Line*. I'm afraid Lonnie had to take second place after that.

Leadbelly was extremely prolific, how did you decide what to include on the record?

My Lord, my list was twice as long as the number of songs that are on the recording. We felt maybe 16 songs were enough for anyone's attention span. Much of the music is very different from the way Leadbelly did it but I think it still retains the spirit of the time and his mindset.

Most of it was recorded here in my bedroom and over at Andrea's (Schuld, producer) place, in the living room there. The drums had to be done in a studio. The same with the upright bass. Because if you try and do all that straight off the floor in some one's bedroom you are just going to end up with one unholy cacophonous mess. The thing for *John Hardy* was done in my



Long John Baldry

" The Yardbirds, they were well-meaning kids but they weren't very good players even though they had Clapton. The rest of the band were not that good. "



Paul McCartney seeing LJB off at Liverpool's Lime Street Station, April 1961

hallway because that's where my pump organ stands. It's from 1865, from the Dominion Organ Company of Beaumontville, Ontario. It's in perfect working condition, which is very unusual. Usually rodents have consumed the interiors 'cause it's a succession of leather bellows and paper reeds and whatnot. Mice and rats love that kind of stuff.

Anyway, we stayed within that two to three-minute length for each song rather than dragging it out with solos. I think that was another great attraction of Leadbelly's music, there was no fat on it, no time being wasted. It made the point in two or three or four verses and that was it. Of course, much of it was recorded in the very early days on 78s when you had to get your point across in two-and-a-half minutes or other wise you were bugged.

You stayed away from his more famous songs, Irene, Alberta, Roberta, Bourgeois Blues

There's lots of people that have covered that stuff already plus there was the quiet good tribute album involving U2 and all those guys for the Smithsonian a few years ago. Actually it was a shared thing between Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly wasn't it. There are a few famous songs on (*Remembering Leadbelly*). For instance, *The Midnight Special*, everybody knows that. And the *Rock Island Line*, which was the world's first conscious introduction to Leadbelly. Although, *Irene* piped them all to the post in terms of it being a hit. I guess *Tuke This Hammer* was quite well known, but as I said in my notes, probably the way I do it is closer to Jessie Fuller's version.

In an interview you did with fRoots, you mentioned approaching Rod Stewart and Ramblin' Jack Elliott to duet with you? What happened to their contributions?

Rod, unfortunately, had the thyroid cancer operation and wasn't allowed to talk for the longest time. That was out of the question. And Jack's wife suddenly died. He was devastated by that because, in addition to being his wife, she was his rock of Gibraltar for many, many years, organized his life and touring schedules. It was totally wrong timing. And if I waited for Rod's voice to heal, and at that time nobody knew if it was going to or not, and waited for Jack to get over his grief, I might never have finished the album. But they were my two people of choice.

How long has this project been percolating?

I had wanted to mark the 50th anniversary of Leadbelly's death which would have been December 5 1999. But being out of the country, and this and that and the other, we didn't actually didn't get rolling until March, 2000. So it's taken well over a year to complete. Which suited me because I like to relax with these things.

What about your singing, who inspired it?

(Howlin') Wolf, I guess was one of my major influences. Muddy, of course. The first influence on me was Big Bill Broonzy. In fact, when Sonny Boy Williamson heard me for the first time, he said, "That John, he's got the rooster crow in his voice." Which is that raucous falsetto that blues singers go into time to time. Sonny Boy, who was a close friend, he heard that in my voice. He worked with us quite often. I think he preferred to be with us more than The Yardbirds. The Yardbirds, they were well-meaning kids but they weren't very good players even though they had Clapton. The rest of the band were not that good. But each of the players in my band, even young Rod starting out, they were all marvelous, marvelous players. Rod at the age of 18, 19 was so special. We did lots of things with Memphis Slim, also Spoon, Jimmy Witherspoon. Once I got the Hoochie Coochie Men up and running (1964) after Cyril had died, we were the band of choice for visiting

artists. We were on the road with Wolf and Hubert Sumlin for a lot of their concert dates. (Wolf) was a huge man, as tall as me, but weighted about 350 lbs. And that wasn't fat, that was a huge solid man. Yet he was so delicate on his feet. I understand in his earlier days he was somewhat of an acrobat who could come on stage somersaulting and doing cartwheels and climb up curtains. He really was quite a wild man.

Was there anyone in particular responsible for bringing those blues artists initially to Britain?

It was Chris (Barber) who brought all the people in like Bill Broonzy and Brother John Sellers, Rosetta Tharpe, who was not a blues player per se, but her guitar playing was very bluesy, that's for sure. She had a very much blues singers approach to religious music. And then there was a succession of people around Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee. Chris brought them in for the first time. And then all the masses and masses of people through the '50s, particularly piano players.

You also played with the influential guitarist Davey Graham didn't you?

Davey and I go back to certainly 1957. We first met in a coffee bar base-

ment on Villiers Street just behind Charing Cross Station. It was open to two or three in the morning, which was very daring back then in London. We started for the love of it, just playing down there every night, passing the hat round. Sometimes in inclement weather we would go out under the Charing Cross arches, which had quite good acoustics, and play music. Then at one time we used to stand and busk outside the National Film Theater on the south bank, which was managed by Dirk Bogard's cousin. I can remember Vittorio De Sica, the great Italian director actually put a £10 note in the hat. Can you imagine that in 1957? Davey was the best and the most authentic Big Bill Broonzy player. Bear in mind we were all playing parrot fashion off the records back in those days. But Davey had it all down pat. A tremendous player. Later on when he became involved with people like Shirley Collins etcetera he started that cross-pollination of blues and English folk, sometimes even with a baroque thing in there. He really was a pioneer of all that and was the forerunner for the guys that came later, the Renbourns and Janch's and Uncle Tom Coby and all.



Leadbelly

Orphan Hand

copyright Maria Dunn 1998

Words & Music by Maria Dunn

Arr. M. Dunn, S. Johnson, S. McDade, J. McDade

Emin Amin Emin Emin D

I. My name it might as well be John for all you care from where I've come, I'll
London streets they boarded me, their "gutter" children sent to sea, at

Emin Amin Emin G D C D

break my back on your homestead to earn my daily bread From
eight years old you took me in but you'll

G D C C Emin

never call me kin Chorus: Is there no-one in this dreary land with a

G D C G D Emin

kind word for an orphan hand? I've worked like hell, done my share, where's the Christian love in your heartless

C D Emin Amin Emin Emin D

stare? 2. Your hardship in this cold, cold land has left you a bitter, tired man, to your
filthy hands & matted hair, feet in rags from the winter's air

Emin Amin Emin 1. G D C D

own you still al - low small joy but you're blind to a father - less boy My
worked like a dog & kept like a pig where's the

2. G D C C Emin

life that I should live? Chorus: Is there no-one in this dreary land with a

G D C G D Emin C

kind word for an orphan hand? I've worked like hell, done my share where's the Christian love in your heartless stare? That

C Emin G D C G

blackened ship that carried me wish had tossed me to the sea, my struggle would have reaped at least a

D Emin C

long em - brace and a moment's peace

3. This land of opportunity has no room for a lad like me
Cast off from the old world on to the new, my worth to ever prove
I'd better been a tinker's son than a Home Boy from a London slum
Sent to this barren farm alone, worked to skin and bone

From the CD: From Where I Stand (1998)

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, thousands of orphan children, and children whose families were too poor to keep them, were shipped from Britain to Canada. It was intended that they would have a new start in life, away from the increasing poverty and social problems of the big industrialized cities like London, Liverpool, and Glasgow. These "Home Children" were placed with Canadian families--many of whom lived on Ontario farms--for whom they worked to earn their keep and a yearly sum of money that would be held in trust until they reached adulthood. Unfortunately, these newest Canadians were often welcomed with prejudice and distrust. The character in this song was inspired by Lewis Thorn from E. Annie Proulx's novel *The Shipping News*.

On August 19, 2001, the Canadian Government formally recognized the contribution made by Home Children to Canada by unveiling a plaque at 51 Avon St. in Stratford, Ontario, one of the former receiving homes for these young immigrants.

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James Keelaghan

Home

Jericho Beach Music
JBM 0201

History made James Keelaghan. From the past, he forged brilliant narrative ballads frequently fraught with social and political outrage. *Small Rebellion*, *Hill Crest Mines*, *Cold Missouri Waters*, *Boom Gone To Bust*, *Fires of Calais*... all monumental songs most certainly guaranteed immortality within the folk tradition. And who can forget the romantic epic, *Jenny Bryce (Jack The Rover's Daughter)*, a song so steeped in traditions of yore it wound up in the discerning repertoires of such luminaries as Christy Moore and Garnet Rogers. Hell, Keelaghan named his still impressive debut LP, *Timelines*. Because, as the sleeve notes remind us: "Most of the songs concern historical events in one way or another."

And yet, as his career blossomed, he began to look inward instead of backward. Frankly, the overall results never quite had the same impact. Try and name one song on *Road*. Gotcha! So *Home* marks his sixth solo release and sees Keelaghan come full circle. And, yeah, he's cracked it. Big time.

At the heart of *Home* sits a trio of breathtaking ballads. There's *October 70*, a remarkably wry commentary on the events surrounding the FLQ Crisis. It's propelled by the driving, instinctive Cajun fiddling of Oliver Schroer. *Stonecutters* features a narrative that reads like an Alistair MacLeod short story as it movingly recounts the life and times of a stone mason who built the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill between 1916 and 1921. *While Sinatra And I* may not pack the same emotional wallop, it's a wonderful piece of story telling, following a drifter from industrial New Jersey, north to Canada, finally settling amidst the isolated tranquility of the Yukon.

There's also an unavoidable sense of joy on the opening cover of David Francey's ode to Spring, *Red-Winged Blackbird*. Likewise the light-hearted, *Sing My Heart Home*. While it's been 14 years since Keelaghan last recorded a traditional song (*Follow Me Up To Carlou*, repeated on *Compadres*), *Home* features two, the most welcome *Flower of Magherally* and the gripping *Henry's Downfall*. Just as impressive is his passionate cover of Ian Tamblyn's classic *Woodsmoke and Oranges*, which concludes with the gentle, mesmerizing chanting of Inuit throat-singers. Simply put, this is one of the most compelling discs released this year. It is also, the best record James Keelaghan



James Keelaghan

has made in a decade, possibly his career. Welcome, *Home*.

— By Roddy Campbell

Bob Dylan Love And Theft

Sony Music
CK 8597

It's the sheer "Bobness" of this disc that immediately delights a Dylan fan.

For here, in one place you'll find every idiosyncratic, signature trait that aggravates the hell out of those who've never understood his appeal and has sustained generations of acolytes even during his dippy (*Empire Burlesque*) and dreary (*Under the Red Sky*) periods.

There's the nasal, rakish voice, with the quirky widening of his vowels and exaggerated emphasis on unexpected syllables. (At 60, Dylan's singing is both immensely flavourful and enthused. For a change, it's also surprisingly mumble-free and show-cased amidst uncluttered production by Dylan himself, aka Jack Frost. There's the famed Dylan assurance with every American folk idiom of the 20th century,

including jazz (*Floater*), country blues, (*High Water*), boogie-woogie (*Summer Days*), Western swing (*Bye and Bye*) and rock, (*Honest With Me*). There's his wily, knowing way with a simple rolling melody (*Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum*) and a mesmerizing groove (*Cry A While*.)

And finally, there are the classic Dylan hit and runs, those barbs, wise couplets and downright hilarious asides that so casually and frequently slip from his songs they sound effortless. Faves from this outing include, "She said you can't repeat the past, I said, you can't, what d'ya mean you can't, of course you can."

Stick it all in a studio with the top-rung and tasteful sidemen Dylan has been touring with aggressively for the past couple of years (guitarists Charlie Sexton and Larry Campbell, bassist Tony Garnier, drummer David Kemper) and it's not only a beautifully crafted disc, it's one that's tremendous fun and certainly ranks among the most satisfying of his 43 recordings.

— By Helen Metella.

Leonard Cohen Ten New Songs

Sony Music
CK 85953

Sept. 11? Has anyone listened to Leonard Cohen's *First We Take Manhattan* lately? There's a song that makes a person shiver twice. It's a brilliantly rendered observation, a sturdy, evocative opinion piece riding an unshakable melody. On his last album, 1992's *The Future*, Cohen was still recording songs that sharp; works the likes of *Closing Time* and *Democracy*.

Since then, he's been living as an ordained Buddhist monk at Mount Baldy, Calif., where he wrote these *Ten New Songs*. Cohen's hushed vocal is endearing still and it's evident he's had brushes with enlightenment this past decade. Still, he felt the need to send off his work to singer Sharon Robinson for collaboration.

Robinson was the co-writer on the stirring *Everybody Knows* and *Waiting for the Miracle*, so it's hard to know which of the two decided on the laconic, unexciting melodies that shuffle through this disc, dragging it down. Worse, so many of the songs carry heavy and pedestrian baggage as well. Too often intriguing thoughts ("you win a while and then it's done, your little winning streak") are followed by mere head-scratchers: "you live your life as if it's real, a thousand kisses deep." Among the effective narratives are *That Don't Make It Junk*, the lament of someone acutely aware of his ability to fall from

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grace again and again, and *My Secret Life*, the complex thoughts of man holding on to the slippery truth. Pity it's such hard work trying to hum them.

— By Helen Metella

Nic Jones

Unearthed
Mollie Music
MMCD 02/03

There may be some Kate Rusby fans wondering who this guy is and why she mentions him at every opportunity. The continuing unavailability of much of his back catalogue has turned Jones into this semi-mythical creature who, so legend has it, achieved Godlike status in the 1970s with his enlightened approach to folk song and visionary acoustic guitar accompaniments which laced the old songs with a rock mentality.

It's nearly 20 years since the horrendous car crash which cruelly ended a career seemingly poised to take a radical new turn, but Nic is suddenly a very real figure again. He maintained a high profile presence throughout the week at this year's Sidmouth Festival, even making it on stage at the Tony Rose benefit concert, and this astonishingly fine double CD collection should comprehensively put him right back on the map. There was certainly nothing wrong with *In Search of Nic Jones*, the previous selection of largely bootleg live recordings of the great man released a couple of years ago, but this double album is vastly superior in every way — from recording quality to Nic's own performances — and should mean he's well and truly found.

It offers further proof of the adventurous new directions being explored at the time of the accident, hinted at by *In search of* ... with plentiful evidence of contemporary material and his own liberties with the traditional music always so intimately associated with him. Certainly the first of the two collection of previously unreleased material included here ranks comparison with his best studio recordings. I'm already obsessed by the opening track *The Jukebox As She Turned*. It could have been written by Richard Thompson but it turns out to be by an obscure American, Jeff Deitchman, learned by Nic from an album by Rick and Lorraine Lee, and is a colourfully cinematic story song that refuses to reveal its punchline. More familiar Jones is a vibrant, punching treatment of *Wartime Lads Of Russia* and a version of *Boots Of Spanish Leather* that Dylan himself would barely recognise. There's also a compellingly brooding version of Ann Lister's *Icarus* and, included as a tribute to Peter Bellamy, *Yarmouth Town*. Less eccentric than Bellamy's own version but still good to hear, while Bill Jones will be intrigued to hear his version of *Oh Dear Rue The Day*, recently recorded by her on *Panchpurran* using a different tune.



Sheila Chandra

Masses of evidence of his celebrated guitar playing, and an album that hangs together perfectly and sounds as fresh and current as it would have done two decades ago.

The second disc is more of an odds-and-ends job of variable recording quality, but it includes one of his gems, *Annachie Gordon* (later recorded by Mary Black, among others) and reminds us of his highly individual take on ballad classics *Barbara Ellen*, *Dives And Lazarus*, *Wanton Seed* and *William of Winesbury*. There's even a gently humorous Ivor Cutler song *I'm Going In A Field* and if you need any further evidence of his unique ability to restructure a song with his own instantly identifiable stamp on it, then listen to his formidable, driving *Clyde Water*. Epic.

If you've only ever heard the accolades, then now 'tis time to gorge on the evidence.

— By Colin Irwin

(This review first appeared in *fRoots* No. 221 and is reprinted here with the kind permission of its editor, Ian Anderson. For further details on this disc see the ad on page 19. . . The Ed.)

Garnet Rogers

Firefly
Snow Goose Songs
SGS129CD

Firefly is Garnet Rogers ninth solo CD — a lot of words have been written about them. So what's a reviewer to write about that hasn't been written before.

Maybe that Rogers has written eight new wonderful songs about ordinary people picking their way through the minefields of real life. Or that Rogers is still an unparalleled interpreter of other people's songs and here he tackles Ralph McTell's *Girl from the Hiring Fair* and Marcus Vichert's *Lady of Spain*.

Rogers set the quality bar very high with his first release and has equaled or raised it with each successive album. Each one has been a joy to listen to. There have been great songs, amazing playing, achingly beautiful singing, and terrific storytelling.

And no one can set a mood better than Mr. Rogers when you visit his neighbourhood. It's a neighbourhood just like yours — full of people with courage, heartaches, humour, and, above all else, hope.

Does *Firefly* live up to its predecessors? Yes it does — in spades. It can sit beside the other Garnet Rogers' recordings as a continuation of an evolving, emotional, entertaining, and important body of work.

Anyone who claims an interest in roots music should have Garnet Rogers in their music library. If you know his work, get a copy of *Firefly*. If you don't know, get a copy of *Firefly* . . . and all the others. Rogers has staked his place as an artist you can count on to deliver the musical goods every time. There's not that many of them out there.

— By Les Siemieniuk

Dhol Foundation

Big Drum: Small World

Shakti
72438-10588-2-4

Sheila Chandra with the Ganges Orchestra

This Sentence Is True (The Previous Sentence Is False)

Shakti
72438-50954-2-9

Temple of Sound & Rizwan-Muazzam Qawwali
People's Colony No.1

Real World
7243-8-50789-2-7

Fun>Da>Mental

There Shall Be Love

Love Nation Records
NRCD2008

Clearly, the most uniquely thrilling roots music made in Britain today comes from its Asian community. From the agitpop of Asian Dub Foundation to the experimental electronics of Talvin Singh, the new sound of Britain certainly marches to the beat of its own Dhol drummer. Traditionally, the large barreled dhol drum is played with the fingers, accompanies the oboe-like *surnai*, and provides the beat for traditional Punjabi music. But the Dhol Foundation are led by Johnny Kalsi of the Afro Celt Sound System and, as expected, all rules vanish in a swirl of enlightened electronica and studio jiggery pokery. The textures here are multi-layered and include the wonderful hurdy gurdy playing of Nigel Eaton (he of Plant and Page, *Gallows Pole*, fame) on *Drummer's Reel* and the singing of the wonderful, although somewhat muted, Natacha Atlas. All told, there's a warm, enlightening and appealing sense of adventure abroad on this disc.

Better known in North America, Sheila Chandra's *This Sentence Is True (The Previous Sentence Is False)* takes up where the largely impenetrable

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Fun>Da>Mental

ABONECRONEDRONE left off. And like its predecessor it's a million miles removed from *Silk* or the equally compelling *Zen Kiss*. Largely experimental and essentially devoid of her inspirational singing, *This Sentence Is...*...deliberately distorted with harsh, grating sound bites and meaningless snatches of lyrics: "The mind is a wordless sky." Agh! *True*, for instance, opens as a beautiful Gregorian Chant and grows over eight minutes into one unholy contorted noise – Yoko Ono territory, and not for the faint of heart.

People's Colony No.1 combines the nephews of the late Qawwali singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan with the London-based collective, Temple of Sound, fronted by the enlightened percussionist Neil Sparkes (Transglobal Underground) and includes the equally imaginative bass playing of Jah Wobble (PIL). All tracks are written or co-written by Sparkes and as a result People's Colony No. 1 is a hip urban, collaboration punctuated with earth-trembling beats and dub rhythms over passionate traditional, devotional singing. Quite clearly a lot of integrity and respect went into this project. Uncle Nusrat most certainly would have approved.

Sometime collaborators, Fun>Da>Mental, are by the odd account the *enfants terribles* of the Asian underground, hinted at by the cover pic which features a young kid giving the two-fingers (the UK gesture for the provocative North American single digit) to the photographer. Whatever, founder Aki Nawatz started out as a member of the goth combo Southern Death Cult, which morphed into The Cult. Now that might explain his boundary busting approach to let *There Shall Be Love*. If not, consider the opening track, *The Last Gospel*,

which opens with a gospel snippet from Mahalia Jackson and moves seamlessly into the devotional singing of Rizwan-Muazzam Qawwali. The beautiful *Sunday School's* coated with the lush South African harmonies of Zamo Mbuto and Comrades. And Tuvan throat singer, Huun Huur Tu, supplies the bedrock of the largely spoken-word of *More Than A Hundred Times*. It all adds up to a brilliant cross-pollination of cultures that deserves acclimation from the highest rooftops in the country

– By Roddy Campbell

Joe Strummer & The Mescaleros

Global A Go-Go

Hellcat
80440-2

The son of a British diplomat, London's most celebrated busker, leader of the seminal punk / political band, The Clash, occasional member of The Pogues, perennially (im)pertinent songwriter, Joe Strummer has led a very colourful existence. His latest venture sees him team up with American fiddler Teymour Dogg and a red-hot new band, The Mescaleros, to treat us to his latest satirical and critical look at the world with 10 new songs which reflect his abiding interest in world music styles and irrepressibly melodic grooves. Sure, he lets loose with the occasional vitriolic outburst or wailing guitar riff, but this is a compelling disc, full of wit and pointed insight.

Bhindi Bhagee is a tongue-in-cheek look at the kind of food that has replaced mushy peas in the street cafes and take-aways of Britain in the last 40 years, and also reflects on the changing musical influences and styles to be heard these days. *Johnny*

Appleseed sees Joe in his most ecologically and politically concerned form, while *Cool 'n' Out* and *Global a Go Go* are scorching reminders of the glories of punk and the power of global village music.

In more restrained mode, Strummer reverts to some of the melodically accessible sounds he pioneered with The Clash on the 1980 triple-LP *Sandinista*, with *Mondo Bongo*, *Bummed Out City* and *At The Border*, *Guy* bringing that sound forward two decades into the new world disorder. The closing track, *Minstrel Boy* is a pretty straight rendition of the trad. tune given an overly long 18-minute waltz-time treatment, but overall, this CD is quintessentially Joe Strummer – a revolution you can dance to. *Plus ça change...*

– By Steve Edge

Lynn Miles

Unravel

True North
TND 264

The wonderful Lynn Miles has been a fixture in Canadian folk music for a while now. After a sojourn to Los Angeles, she has returned home to Ottawa and hooked up with some old friends like Ian LeFeuvre of Starling, who produced and plays on, this, her fourth album.

It's funny that her press bio opens with the line 'Lynn Miles is not afraid to look at the melancholy side of life.' Well she shouldn't be afraid, as she can handle it with supreme grace and style. As she says "sad songs matter most." Miles is blessed with a wonderful voice that she uses to full effect in her confessional songs. She invokes a softer gentler Lucinda Williams, seemingly less resigned to the down side of life – always with a breath of hope in her voice. And she can sure paint pictures we all recognize – that moment when the ache and pain of a failed love affair ends. Lovely little lines are scattered throughout her songs: "Back of my throat - I taste my pride, swallow hard and I wipe my eyes". And: "I remember your skin, your cigarette breath, your leather hands touching my neck, crazy eyes, reckless grin, that's always how you always pulled me back in".

Ian LeFeuvre's done a wonderful job with the instrumentation and sound of this disc. It's beautiful and gentle straddling pop and folk with lovely rootsy touches. Each song gets the treatment it deserves whether it's with the full band or just Miles' lovely voice with piano and guitar. *Unravel*, it's a beauty – not a bad song in the bunch.

– By Les Siemieniuk.

Buddy & Julie Miller

Buddy & Julie Miller

Highnote
HCD 8135

After collaborations that saw them putting out a bunch of CDs under their individual names, Buddy and Julie Miller have decided to cross over to the same side of

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the studio glass. It's an idea whose time had come and one that can only enhance each of their reputations. On first impression, Julie has a slightly stronger presence on the album, having written seven songs and co-written one with Buddy. The three covers are Richard Thompson's *Keep Your Distance*, Bob Dylan's *Wallflower*, and Utah Phillips' *Rock Salt and Nails*. The whole album is permeated with the spirit of rural country music from fifty years ago but propped up by an expansive production that manages to encompass everything that has gone on in the genre since then. The trick is to know where to set the limits and, to their credit, they do.

Julie Miller's songs are strong enough in themselves but what especially stands out is the musicianship (with a B3 organ having a strong presence throughout), as well as the complex harmonies and the passionate singing. *You Make My Heart Beat Too Fast*, for example, is a song with a simple, straightforward message that Julie sings in her wall-like voice but the crunchy guitar, the lustful sentiments, and the primal forcefulness of the sound leads one to suspect that The Troggs were as much of an influence as anything else. In contrast, *Rachel* is a poignant tribute to the first victim of the Columbine school tragedy. This joint effort could prove to be a milestone in this duo's career.

— By Paul E. Comeau

North Cregg

mi.d.a:za

Magnetic Music
MMR CD 1032)

The Sliabh Luachra region of Ireland does tend to produce great music and musicians: Nomos, Sliabh Notes, Jackie Daly, and now North Cregg. Actually, this is the group's second CD, seemingly still without any significant North American distribution. Which is a shame, since they do deserve more exposure over here.

Like many traditionally-oriented Irish groups, North Cregg play a mix of songs and tunes, with the tunes predominating. These are mostly a full band affair, with piano, snare drum, guitar and banjo supporting the accordion and fiddle, although one set of hornpipes is given a rather interesting two-piano treatment. The songs, featuring the distinctive vocals of John Neville, include one Neville original, a fine version of Steve Tilston's *Slip Jigs and Reels*, the traditional *Lord Franklin*, and *Farewell to the Gold*, a Paul Metzger song that you may know from Nic Jones' *Penguin Eggs*. All in all, the songs seem better integrated into the band's sound than those on the first record, and provide welcome breaks from the full-on exuberance of the polkas, reels, slides, and jigs. Well worth checking out.

— By Richard Thornley

Radio Tarifa Cruzando El Rio

Nonesuch
79629-2

Radio Tarifa is a Madrid, Spain-based garage band, but rather than banging out three-chord punk, this trio delivers intricate Flamenco and Moorish music – but with a contemporary twist. Many of their songs are driving, a strange blend of exotic woodwinds mingling with the fuzzed-out guitar and jangling percussion.

Radio Tarifa, named for an imaginary radio station at Tarifa – the southernmost part of Spain and the closest point between Europe and Africa – aren't afraid to experiment. Some of the band's tunes, such as the title track (a traditional tango), are reminiscent of the new-fangled Brazilian fusion of Arto Lindsay.

Elsewhere, Radio Tarifa tackles traditional Japanese (!) music with glee. And percussion aficionados will delight in the bang and thump of *Pata Negras*, a song that incorporates balafon among other instruments.

Generally, singer Benjamin Escoriza, Vincent Molino on keyboards and woodwinds, and guitarist and percussionist Fain S. Duenas are lockstep with each other, always working together in a polyphonic shifting of rhythms, the group united in its joyful sonic exploration. Sometimes Radio Tarifa can be strident, but generally it's a case of don't touch that dial.

— By Charles Mandel

Ken Hamm Cross The River

Festival
NTCD2K0

Despite Ken Hamm's acclaim as a bluesman, he steers closer to the folk-based

roots of a Tom Rush or Eric Andersen to this listener. His instrumental gifts on acoustic and National Steel guitar are obvious on some of this disc's best tracks, John Fahey's *Last Steam Engine Train* and the exceptional, self-penned *Buckbreak* and *Robbed In Reno*. Yet, the discerning may note that these tracks are instrumentals. Hamm's vocals fall on the rough side of rocky – certainly competent and appropriate to his choice of covers and originals but not his strong suit.

Yet the calibre of his writing alongside the works of Fahey, Jesse Fuller, Blind Blake and the accompanying level of playing is so accomplished as to almost cancel out any vocal shortcomings. Each song is buttressed by elaborate fingerpicking and slide guitar and, on many cuts, impressive accompaniment by the banjo work and harmonies of Donna Konsorodo. The most appealing songs are those they tackle together – *Full Moon Night* and *Blackeyed Suzie* – complimenting each other nicely and elevating the end result (*Shortstack*). Bruce Everett provides tasteful wind instrumentation on five tracks, adding to the moodiness. For the most part, *Cross The River* is an uplifting vision – from its buoyant musical perspective to its tasteful packaging.

— By Eric Thom

Dar Williams Out There Live

Razor and Tie
7830182871-2

k.d. lang Live by Request

Warner Bros.
CDW 48108

Two exquisite female voices. Two humorous, liberal-minded singer-songwriters and



North Cregg

Recordings

acknowledged crowd favourites. Both delivering their first live album. One I'll likely listen to repeatedly, the other probably not. What's with that?

Of the two, Williams' disc is the more successful as a best-hits compilation, gathering 16 of the most cleverly wordy and memorably hummable cuts from her four studio efforts, including *End of the Summer*, *As Cool As I Am*, *The Babysitter's Here* and *The Christians and the Pagans*. She also mixes her tempos up, delivering story-heavy balladry (*If I Wrote You, February*) as well as peppy pop-rock the likes of *Are You Out There, Better Things*. And she explores her three-octave range (*Spring Street*). But best of all, the disc truly sounds like an enchanting evening at one of her shows, punctuated by several of her wry, delightful song intros and propelled by the hot band of road warriors who toured with her to support her last disc, *The Green World*.

They include Shawn Colvin's guitarist Steurt Smith, Gang of Four's bassist Gail Ann Dorsey, Southside Johnny keyboardist Jeff Kazee and Joe Cocker drummer Steve Holley – each of them turning in tasteful, tight accompaniment.

Live By Request is the audio version of a DVD created during an A&E live broadcast taped at a New York City college in December 2000. The show furnishes viewers with the opportunity to determine the song-list and these viewers seemed to lean heavily to lang's lounge-lizard side. The disc feels disproportionately weighted to lang's blander easy-listening tunes, the likes of *Barefoot*, *The Consequences of Falling*, *Don't Smoke In Bed* and *Black Coffee*. But perhaps that's just because the arrangements are all so similar. Her renditions of the country-blues classic *Three Cigarettes in An Ashtray* and *Trail of Broken Hearts* are slightly more powerful than her original versions, but not so different to make this a do-not-miss recording. *Constant Craving*, *Miss Chatelaine* and *Big-Boned Girl* are all played absolutely true to form. Meanwhile, *Cryin'* simply can't compete with lang's stunning Orbison duet. Elements that might have made the live disc special – some sense of spirited experimentation with her oldest songs or lang's highly original, off-kilter on-stage banter – have been completely ignored.

Even the audience is hardly a presence. The collection is a solid and pleasant introduction for someone who has never heard of lang before, but really, who would that include?

– By Helen Metella

Tamarack

Spirit and Stone

Wind River Records
WR-4018

Ontario's Tamarack marks a return to the straight up Canadian folk scene with the release of their sixteenth album *Spirit and*

Stone. After a two-year break and the departure of long time member James Gordon, the Tamarackers are now Molly Kurvink, Shelly Coopersmith and original founder Alex Sinclair.

This album finds them trekking in a somewhat new direction. There are certainly the necessary staple Tamarack river tunes, but also the inclusion of an old Temptations song *I Wish It Would Rain* which seems to sit very comfortably with the other tales of articulate historical significance. *Oh Donald* and *Retreating Like Tecumseh* receive the benefit of fine production work at the hands of John Switzer.

There's an overriding darker and haunting edge to this disc, and that feeling is encapsulated in the *Gradual Demise of All Things* which invokes sentiments usually found in the likes of Tom Waits or Leonard Cohen.

Spirit of Stones finishes with Zachary Richard's song of the plight of Acadian exile *Dans Le Nord Canadien*, which reminds us that there's always been a darkness lurking in our own Canadian history.

– By Jay Knudson

Taraf De Haidouks

Band of Gypsies

Nonesuch
79641-2

If you're in the mood for some frantic Gypsy jazz, Romania's Taraf de Haidouks will more than fill the bill. *Band of Gypsies*, recorded live in Bucharest over the course of three concerts, is a wild affair. The 13-piece Taraf de Haidouks is joined by a number of guests, including Macedonia's flamboyant Kocani Orkestar Brass Band.

The recording opens with the jaunty *Dance of the Firemen* before settling into

the crazed whirlwind of *A La Turk*. This latter piece shows the agility of Taraf de Haidouks, accompanied here by the Macedonian brass band, as they adroitly float a Spanish-styled trumpet over what could easily pass for a German oom-pah band. It's all very unorthodox, to say the least.

The blistering pace continues with *The Return of the Magic Horses*, a sort of Gypsy variation on *Flight of the Bumblebee*. Taraf de Haidouks' normal method is to let double bassist Viorel Vlad and the band's three cymbalum – small ringing bronze cymbals – players set up the double-time beat and then layer the violins and accordions over top. It's pleasingly complex, always off-beat, and absolutely enthralling.

– By Charles Mandel

Dub Selector

Dub Selector

Quango Records
QMG 5005-2

The first thing that struck me about this disc was the cover. Ugly and unreadable just doesn't do it justice. Mind you, they say not to judge a book by its cover, this must be the 21st century proof.

Excellent disc. I've been rotatin' it again and again and again. Inspired by original Dub artists from the 70's, the standout tracks include Luciano's cover of the Junior Murvin / Lee Perry classic *Police and Thieves*.

The sequencing of the tracks is done inna crossfade stylee, so there is a very chilled out mood from beginning to end. Cottonbelly, (he of the excellent *Night Nurse* remix available elsewhere) covers *Tempest Dub* liberally sprinkled with Scientist samples and a nod to Adrian



Tamarack

Recordings

Sherwood and On-U Sound with the use of some well placed Audio Active samples on the Grant Phabad track *Andub Head You*. Also from France, the very moving in all senses of the word, St. Germain, who put in another great performance on *A Dub Experience*.

So crank de bass and launch into outta space...to de sounds of the Dub Selector.

— By Dave McQueen

Beyond The Pale

Routes

Borealis
BCD134

Feel. That's what to look for in a good Klezmer recording (or any other kind for that matter). The sad songs should be mournful, the humorous songs need to make you smile and, when the dance tunes begin, your feet should start moving by themselves. Toronto Klezmer band, *Beyond The Pale*, has feel in spades.

Founded in 1998 by Eric Stein (Mandolin, Tsimbl) and featuring Anne Lindsay (Violin), Sasha Luminsky (Accordion), Martin van de Ven (Clarinets), and Bret Higgins (Bass) the group is traditional enough to satisfy all but the most fanatic purists and experimental enough to stretch the boundaries of those traditions in some interesting new directions. All four melody instruments take turns ably leading the ensemble, while Higgins bounces the bottom end along. Guest Dave Wall does a fine job on Yiddish language vocals, and percussionist Rick Lazar adds a driving, hypnotic world music edge to some tracks.

The disc is a significant addition to the Klezmer revival. It's great to see Toronto continuing to produce terrific musicians and adding to the musical canon, with groups like this and The Flying Bulgar Klezmer Band. Highly recommended.

— By Barry Hammond.

Ass Ponys

Lohio

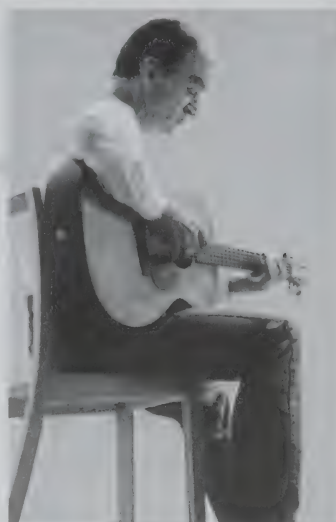
Checked Past
CPR024

After several listens, this turns out to be a good album. You can actually tell that right away, it's just good form to check these things, didn't your mammy tell you anything about journalism?

Call it insurgent country, I'm going to more accurately call it rock and roll, something for the college kids. Rolling ballads aimed directly at the real world, this is a little like listening to a newborn Son Volt, but with more of a sense of humour (on their part, and apparently yours), less of a mandate to hunt down and wear the traditional.

The odd fiddle shows up, of course. The singing diverges from that, though. It deserves its own mention, tender like the Eels when they're, um, being tender.

Vancouver's Chuck Cleaver has a high, whispery voice in his command, and writes



Martin Carthy

songs about things like Rutger Hauer, porno magazines and snow. Thankfully not all in the same song. The opening track about the latter is very nice, mind you. And the song titles themselves reveal education. (*Baby*) I Love You (*Baby*), for example, or one called *Kung Fu Reference*.

Good, production-happy, shoe-staring rock and roll, with the odd bit of brilliant robotic honky tonk, such as found on the song *Only*, which appears to be about fast food as a metaphor for becoming a better man in a relationship. "I could be your super-size"? Well, why not, at least it's real, just like "the bugs singing louder than God."

If anything's wrong here, maybe it's the cleverness itself; it can almost get in the way now and again. The music is tight enough, though, and the tune *Butterfly* near the end is really something for anyone ready to lie down on the floor for an afternoon and wonder just what the hell went wrong. Gen X growing up, ugh, but it's true... that's what this feels like most. Ass Ponys keeping it real, then. If that sounds like your paper bag of kittens and stones, grab it now before the lake freezes over.

— By Fish Griwkowsky

Martin Carthy

The Carthy Chronicles

Free Reed
FRQCD-60

Or how Martin Carthy's biographer gets to declare an interest straightaway. This, the first shoe-boxed British folk CD set is organized into four subdivisions: Classic Carthy (bigguns from *Scarborough Fair* and *Maid And The Palmer* to *Prickle Holly Bush*), *Carthy in Company* (collab-

orations with Steeleye Span, Oskorri, Band of Hope etc), *Carthy Contemporaries* (covers), and *Child:Carthy* (Child balladry).

As an organizing principle, it works, necessarily overlapping at times. The anthology's subtitle could be *A history of phrasing*, since having so much material in one place shows off most of the various character voices adopted, discarded and assimilated (from Mockney to Joseph Taylor and beyond) in the creation of Martin Carthy as a vocalist and instrumentalist.

Closer attention to the printed material, both in an editorial and a proofing sense would have paid dividends. Editorially speaking, Colin Irwin's generally good essay skips, for example, the important influence of Carthy's mother, who shaped his lyrical and editorial sensibilities, while, heedful of the copy-editing tenet that you never proof your own stuff, a splattering of misspellings and factual inaccuracies such as the premature ejaculation (1970) of his marriage to Norma Waterson (1972) detract if you know about such matters.

What remains after all the nitpicking is an exceptional testament to the English folk scene's foremost principal player.

— By Ken Hunt

The Wayfaring Strangers

Shifting Sands of Time

Rounder Catalogue

11661-0484-2

If you'd told me 30 years ago when I was banging my head along to *Deep Purple In Rock* that I'd end up listening to and enjoying a bluegrass/folk/jazz/Celtic/ klezmer crossover album I would have shaken my greasy locks in disbelief.

But here we are in 2001 and that album is *Shifting Sands of Time*. The brainchild of Boston-based violinist/composer Matt Glaser, it is a passionate musical marriage of diverse but ultimately compatible styles. A stellar band featuring Matt Glaser, Andy Statman, John McGann, Jennifer Kimball, Bruce Barth, Tony Trischka and Jim Whitney, are joined by guests such as Ralph Stanley, Lucy Kaplansky, Tracy Bonham, and Tim O'Brien.

The undoubted highlight on first listen is *Man of Constant Sorrow* which features an astonishingly raw vocal by Ralph Stanley and a delicately constructed jazz piano solo by Lazlo Gardony.

There's a mournful and touching rendition of *High on a Mountain* and Bill Monroe's *Memories of You* featuring velvet harmonies between Kimball and Kaplansky. There's so much more but for now suffice to say that this CD rewards repeated listening as the music elegantly unfolds and comes highly recommended.

— By Tim Readman

Recordings

Montcorbier

Le Piano De Sarah

S.R.I.
CAM 2010

Montcorbier is Daniel Thonon's newest group, the successor to the long-lived Ad Vieille Que Pourra. Thonon, a master of the accordion, bagpipes and hurdy gurdy, is joined in this latest effort by Nicolas Boulrice and Olivier Demers, both multi-instrumentalists and composers in their own right. The group's name is a reference to François de Montcorbier, a medieval French poet known for his colourful life as a bandit, thief, and murderer (he mortally wounded a priest on one occasion and escaped a death sentence only because his was publicly forgiven by the priest on his deathbed). Happily, Montcorbier's music is more evocative of de Montcorbier's romantic side than it is his criminal tendencies: Le Piano de Sarah bears witness to a diverse set of influences-ragtime (*Thonon Deme Boule's Rag*), classical (*Choral prelude*), French and Belgian traditional (*L'andromat*), and more modern rock music (*Laridebride*) - all beautifully rendered. The double-entendres and tongue-in-cheek tune titles, as you can see, remain intact from Thonon's Ad Vieille Que Pourra days, although I must admit that most of the jokes escape me. However, one does not need to be a master of the French language to enjoy the disc; it is purely instrumental and filled to the brim with a great bunch of tunes. The feeling is a little more lush and, dare I say, sentimental than Thonon's previous group, but that perhaps reflects the slightly different focus of this very talented assemblage. Well worth seeking out.

- By Richard Thornley

Gary West

The Islay Ball

Greentrax Recordings
CDTRAX 221

Gary West has a very pleasant problem with the release of this, his debut CD: how does he follow it up for an encore.

To start with, he is a very nice player of the Scottish Highland and Small Pipes as well as Irish High and Low Whistles. He also has surrounded himself with a strong supporting cast of musicians.

The Islay Ball opens with a blistering little set of tunes and then totally shifts gears on the next track, which is made up of a nice collection of jigs from the border area. Following that is a beautiful whistle and harp duet on a lovely air.

This change of pace and variety continues throughout the recording and really helps to keep the listener's attention. Highland pipes solo, with piano, small pipes with concertina, cello, all of which makes for a very pleasant and interesting mix.

There are also some lovely interactions between instruments coupled with strong

arrangements. An example would be the *Border Country Jig* set with the Scottish Small Pipes and Concertina complimenting each other very nicely.

But I have to confess (a little selfishly) that my absolute favorite track was the *Kilworth Hills* set. Apart from being a great tune, the small pipe and cello duet is nothing short of stunning. It is truly a wonderful tribute to one of the classics of highland pipe music.

- By Rob Menzies

Chris Thile

Not All Who Wander Are Lost

Sugar Hill
SUG-CD-3931

No other performer has so emotionally charged the bluegrass community in recent years than Chris Thile and his band, Nickel Creek. Despite being named mandolinist and instrumental group of the year by the International Bluegrass Music Association, both entities are designated with several labels - too California, too jazz, too young, too modern - each essentially condenses to not-bluegrass-enough to appease the traditionalists. Such dismissals are unfortunate and shortsighted because Thile may take all forms of music to unconventional levels.

Yet few have more respect for the founders of bluegrass than Chris Thile. It is just that he chooses to play something apart. His version of bluegrass, if one must address it as such, is not better than traditional grass - it is an entirely different dog.

Thile's music encourages the listener to become one with the sound as surely as anything Mr. Monroe recorded. All tracks

possess the verve of bluegrass but most assuredly they progress into a unique, emotional entity. Thile's melodies are challenging, the counterpoints daunting. The instrumentation, invigorating in its perfection, is not as sterile and off-putting as newgrass recordings by, say, New Grange. Edgar Meyer's bass allows Thile to explore the fertile tones the mandolin affords while other guests - including Bela Fleck, Stuart Duncan, and Bryon Sutton - render a full sound without cluttering the atmosphere inhabited by these acoustically inspired, jazz and pop influenced, compositions. The album's masterpiece may be *You Deserve Flowers*, a grassical duet between Thile and Meyer that goes beyond anything found on Thile's Nickel Creek recordings.

Experiencing the aural manifesto that is Chris Thile's third solo album, one gets the distinct impression that, while this young man may journey, he is most justly confident in his navigation skills. Ultimately, the soul of his music will shape the spirit of the next generation's bluegrass.

- By Donald Teplyske

Dennis Lakustra

Suusa's Room

Eon Music
DJL 003

Alberta's Dennis Lakustra wears his heart on his sleeve with his third and latest release *Suusa's Room*.

As a performer Lakustra is most commonly known for his comedic irreverence. This sense of humour is not put on the shelf entirely with this album but tends to take a back seat to more pressing and sensitive issues.

Flying Things sets the tone early in a "plaintive cry for sanity" to the late Colleen Peterson and seven others Lakustra has seen pass away from cancer in recent years. It's a hypnotic groove that he lets mature to a one and five bass heartbeat.

Sixteen is an acknowledgement to the unnatural passing of 16 band members of a Vancouver Island aboriginal community, with a spoken word intro recited by Marilyn Dumond, a descendent of Metis leader Gabriel Dumond.

Lakustra's voice is firmly entrenched in Canadiana, sounding a bit like Stompin' Tom or a baritone Hank Snow as he sings of the road in *18 Wheels* and *A little Bit Like a Train*. Lester Quitau adds a nice touch with some soulful guitar and harmonica. The album as a whole has just enough unexpected twists and colours to take it from the predictable Canadian mainstream folk alley, and place it in a room above.

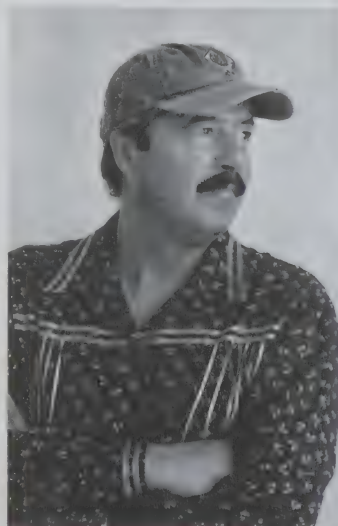
- By Jay Knudson

Doug James

Blow Mr. Low

Stony Plain
SPCD 1276

The bottom line on baritone saxophonist



Dennis Lakustra

Recordings

Doug James' first solo disc is that it's about time a horn took centre stage. James' renowned work with both Roomful of Blues and the Duke Robillard Band, holds him in good stead to take his best shot at raising the profile of the baritone sax above its present status of...well, a large, awkward horn.

Schooled in the nuances of jazz, R & B and pop, James' mission to educate the masses while having a blast succeeds on his instrument's ability to swing. Cases in point include serious instrumentals including *Bobbie's Boogie* and *Son Of Mr. Big Horn*. Both tracks prove irresistible toe-tappers, if not hip-dislocaters. On *Blues For Leo* - Parker (Dizzy Gillespie/Billy Eckstine), the died-too-young bebopper gets a loving remembrance with able support from piano (Matt McCabe) and acoustic bass (Marty Ballou). On the smooth side, Sugar Ray Norcia lends his sophisticated pipes to *I Want A Little Girl* and *Dirty, Dirty People* with Duke Robillard sitting in on two tracks, including the title song. All-in-all, Doug James has succeeded in throwing a party you won't want to miss out on. Because, as Mr. James has surely proven, there's no business like low business.

- By Eric Thom

Sonny Rhodes

A Good Day To Play The Blues

Stony Plain
SPCD 1273

Sixty-one-year-old Sonny Rhodes is lucky to be alive. Recently surviving a horrific highway accident and losing most of his worldly possessions. As a result, every day is *A Good Day To Play The Blues*. And play them he does, in the traditions of fellow Texans T-Bone Walker and Freddie King, except he favours the non-traditional

Hawaiian lap steel guitar. This second Stony Plain release offers a big bag o' blues that covers a lot of ground. Like his influences, Rhodes is only too eager to incorporate strong elements of soul and R&B into his definition of the blues. As a result, the contrast between cuts like the mournful *She's Not Happy Unless She's Sad* and the uptempo funkfest of *Love and Harmony* underlines Rhodes truly eclectic range. Yet his slide prowess on his chosen instrument and his hard-rasped, soulful crooning provide a one-two punch that distinguishes him from the crowd. As if his turban wouldn't. A road-weathered touring machine, Rhodes is best caught live but, until then, this should improve whatever day you choose to play your blues.

- By Eric Thom

Kevin Burke, Johnny Cunningham, Christian LeMaitre

Celtic Fiddle Festival, Rendezvous

Green Linnnet
GLCD 1216

You might expect that the Celtic Fiddle Festival would be quite a lively affair, especially when said group is composed of three of the tradition's leading lights: Kevin Burke (Bothy Band, Patrick Street), Johnny Cunningham (Silly Wizard, Relativity), and Christian LeMaitre (Kornog). What you in fact get with *Rendezvous* is some consummate fiddling, ably supported in places by guitar, acoustic bass, and cello, that is closer in spirit to chamber music than it is to the rawer approach that I had expected. That said, the group turns in spectacular versions of *The Skye Boat Song*, *O'Carolan's Concerto*, and various other Scottish, Irish, and Breton tunes. About half of these are ensemble pieces while the other half feature different group members in solo settings. It's all fairly meditative, although there are a couple of more lively pieces (*The Graf Spee*, *Sherlock's Fancy*, and *The Pride of Chuinte*). Better suited, perhaps, to curling up with a Scotch on a cold winter's night than it is to kicking off your shoes and dancing up a storm. But nice stuff, all the same.

- By Richard Thornley

Tim Harrison

Sara and the Sea

2nd Avenue records

It's the backbone of folk music - a boy or girl and their guitar. There are a lot of good ones around and Tim Harrison, one of old reliables, who has played the folk circuit for many years, is still one of the best. In addition to all his work artistically directing a myriad of Ontario festivals, he's always kept up the songwriting and performing. He seems to be having a creative renaissance

in the last few years. Harrison put out his first album in 1979, then one in 85, but now he has put out four recordings in the last six years.

Sara and the Sea is the latest. And you get exactly what you have come to expect from Harrison - songs sung from the heart and with passion. A great songwriter and an even better singer, he puts his all into every word and transports you from the shoreline of the sea, in the title track, where a woman wanders the beach pondering the loss of a loved one.

Sara and the Sea is populated with people facing the realities of life in Canada these days - relocating for a chance at a better life (*Gonna ride that Train*) to the human melancholy of lost loves in a stunning ballad *Ghosts of PEI*.

Tim Harrison's *Sara and the Sea* exceeds the standards he has set in his other recordings and is a joy to listen to.

- By Les Siemieniuk

The Gourds

Shinebox

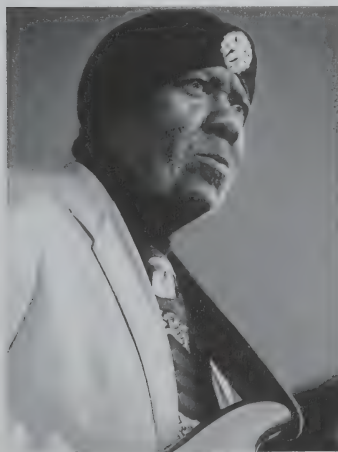
Sugar Hill
SUG-CD-3922

The Gourds have a recording history that is almost as hard to trace as their sound is to categorize. Since 1996, the group from Texas has released five albums on a Dutch label (one with a German name - Munich), and a few of them also ended up on the now defunct Watermelon label. With the release of *Shinebox*, which was originally released as an EP in 1998 called

Gogetyershinebox, the group has now seen all five of its albums reissued on Sugar Hill. The Gourds fit under the alternative country label but that category hardly does justice to the band's free-wheeling sound. The group's earthy and slightly eccentric approach to acoustic music is what one might expect from highly creative musicians partaking in an all-night, liquored-up kitchen party in some out of the way Texas bungalow.

For a change, there are fewer original songs on *Shinebox* than there are covers. It leads off with the group's rapless version of Snoop Doggy Dogg's *Gin & Juice*, a recording that took on a life of its own on the Internet. Besides several traditional songs, The Gourds offer original versions of David Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust*, Billie Joe Shaver's *Omaha*, Nils Lofgren's *Everybody's Missing the Sun*, and an exquisite rendition of Townes Van Zandt's *Two Girls*. Comparisons with The Band are apt but The Gourds replace Robertson's electric guitar with a propulsive mandolin. Five of the tracks were recorded live in Amsterdam for a radio show. The rough edges are even more apparent on some of these tracks, but it's this kind of disheveled sound that makes up half the group's charm.

- By Paul E. Comeau



Sonny Rhodes

Recordings

Sam Phillips Fan Dance

Nonesuch
79625-2

Think Marlene Dietrich minus the accent. Then add John Lennon on his way to the studio, humming a killer wisp of melody while whittling tense observations into caustic couplets. There. That's the new Sam Phillips disc, an unlikely yet riveting acoustic work whose approach is completely different than anything that's come unplugged in recent memory.

Phillips has always been a stubborn individualist. In 1988, she abandoned a promising career in Christian pop music, assigning her dusky contralto to several stylish pop discs notable for their arch lyrics and intricate arrangements. When the masses overlooked both her lustrous voice and wit, she checked out of the business, surfacing only recently as the composer behind deliciously interesting incidental music on TV's *The Gilmore Girls*.

But with this confidently uncompromising disc, Phillips truly stands apart as someone who boldly cuts through the crap and asserts herself.

Stark arrangements spotlight her' sweet melodies and peculiar poetry. Tom Waits' guitarist, Marc Ribot, provides the lion's share of the accompaniment with a hard-edged eccentricity, but percussionist Carla Azar and guitarist-bassist T-Bone Burnett (Phillips' producer and husband) make potent appearances. The lone cello of Martin Tillman on *Wasting My Time* is appropriately unnerving. Lyrically, Phillips' overall meaning is mostly oblique, but each tune boasts several arresting lines like this from *Five Colors*: "I tried but can't find refuge in the angle, I'll walk the mystery of the curve."

Oddly, considering Phillips' creative range and appetite for experimentation, the disc is just 33 minutes long and peters out with unsatisfying song snippets called *Below Surface* and *Is That Your Zebra?* (the latter consists of just six words). It's a cheesy flaw in an otherwise assured and fascinating work by a mature and thoughtful performer.

— By Helen Metella

in the belly of a whale Danny Michel

Independent
C3-PO

I was going to a workshop in Edmonton to catch the much-hyped Joe Henry and Jimmy Dale Gilmore. Joe Henry was good and Jimmy Dale was great as always but I walked away raving about Danny Michel.

Now living just outside Ottawa, He's originally from Kitchener-Waterloo. He's probably best known in and around Ontario as a solo artist but people across the country may have heard some of the bands he has been in. The Rhinos, in the early '90s were

a staple of college radio and he was a member of Starling until recently. But all the while he has been doing great solo work in *the belly of a whale* is his fourth album. I think Danny is on to something here. It's a beautifully arranged pop record. Every song on the CD is fresh and goes lyrically into uncharted territory — you ever know what he's going to say. From his first line of each song he draws you in and you go wherever he takes you willingly.

I love the lines in the song *Toledo*: "I'd sing karaoke for you, So go on girl Pick your favourite song, And the Japanese Jimmy Deans rockabilly boyfriends sing along."

I love the moods he sets in this song and the way he uses words. He paints a picture of being alone in a hotel room like I've never heard it. He writes with humour, a melancholy view of life and a deft way with words. I listened to this album and Flipside, which came out two years ago, and each song is terrific.

Danny Michel: experience his music. You'll be glad you did.

— By Les Siemieniuk

Maria Kalaniemi With Sven Ahlback

Airbow

NorthSide Records
NSD6058

This is the disc that introduced me to the sounds of Scandinavia — in this case Sweden and Finland. Lucky me.

The title of this disk *Airbow* comes from the collaboration of the accordion and violin. Master Accordionist, Maria Kalaniemi

(the Fin), along with fiddler Sven Ahlback (the Swede) presents us with this gift — a gorgeous duet album of traditional and original tunes. Their playing and style fit seamlessly together, and the result is like a comfortable dialogue between old friends.

Kalaniemi, is a master of the standard and free bass five-row chromatic button accordion; she also plays the two-row accordion and the melodeon. Sven Ahlback is also a teacher and accomplished folk musician. He plays fiddle with NorthSide artists Rosenberg 7.

The CD cover is what compelled me to look closely and listen. "What is that?" I asked. It turned out to be a very close up photograph of grass refracted and poking through ice. This CD cover is, as are all examples of NorthSide Records artwork, exquisite — an equally adept description of the sound and emotion contained in this small piece of plastic.

— By Dave McQueen

Franco

The Rough Guide to Franco

World Music Network
RGNET 1071 CD,

L'Okanga Landju Pene Makiadi — better known as Franco — was one of the most influential African artists of the 20th Century, a prolific composer, astute social commentator and one heck of a guitarist. *The Rough Guide to Franco* features a broad range of material scanning his 40-plus-year career.

Merengue starts it off with a 17-year-old Franco already writing, arranging, playing and singing in his OK Jazz Band, circa 1956. Even at this age you can detect the



Maria Kalaniemi With Sven Ahlback

Recordings

Latin influence that went on to define many of the later Congolese bands. The Guide thoughtfully winds its way through Franco's catalogue of the 1960s, 70s and 80s finishing with his last great song *Attention Na Sida (Beware of Aids)* recorded in 1987. He died in 1989.

This collection is well selected and researched. The packaging is first rate and the audio production is a good accurate testament to the source sounds. It shows Franco to be the master of the sebene – the serious business of getting the audience up on its feet and dancing. It is also a great snapshot of the life, times and music of an African musical legend.

– By Jay Knutson

Dervish

Midsummer's Night

Whirling Discs
WHRL005

If you are wondering if Dervish's new CD lives up to the night and beauty of their previous four releases you'll be wondering what hit you instead within seconds of listening. They steam in full tilt with the title track, a powerful and compelling set of reels played with driving rhythm and fiery spirit.

Truly, this seven-piece offers up a superb mix of reels, jigs, slides and songs which fully showcase the depth of their performance and the effectiveness of the arrangements. There are many highlights but my personal favourites almost always feature Cathy Jordan. Her singing has so much soul and drive, particularly on her impassioned reading of *The Banks of Sweet Viledee*. The twin fiddles are also a delight as on the *Palmer's Gate* set of reels which also features some fine flute playing and devilishly intricate rhythmic backing from bozouki, mandolin and guitar. *The Abbeyfeale Set's* jigs and slides fly along briskly while the reels in the *Out on the Road* set keep the kettle well and truly boiling. Whirling dervishes indeed!

There are some beautiful slower moments too. The mid section of the CD starts with *Erin Gra mo Chroi* – a beautiful song of parting and sorrow. *The Lark on the Strand*, another set of jigs and reels starts slowly and delicately although it picks up momentum. Then it's back to the lyrical and moving *Cairns Hill*, a plaintive slow air. Perhaps it is my confessed bias towards melody, stories and singing but with repeated plays I found myself constantly coming back to listen to the songs. On *Maid in Her Father's Garden*, Jordan's expressive story-telling style is in full evidence. On *An T-Uil* she switches effortlessly into Gaelic for a jaunty tale of loving and losing. The final track *Red Haired Mary* is delivered with wit and a wink as the sassy and boisterous tale unfolds. It's all over in just over two minutes but it packs an unforgettable punch. As their biography says, "The name Dervish was chosen as it related to any group of poor but spiritual people



Dervish

who become enraptured by music." Works for me.

– By Tim Readman

Various Artists

Putumayo's Carnival

Putumayo
PUT 185-2

All around the world, Carnival is celebrated with a mixture of music, food, alcohol and sex. For these purposes, we'll focus on the music.

Carnival dates back to an ancient Greek festival in honour of Dionysus, the god of wine. A few other gods got in on the party and before you know it everyone was exchanging clothes and celebrating various indulgences in drunken revelry. This devil-may-care attitude has brought about some of the most vivacious music in the world today. From Brazil to Spain, New Orleans to Trinidad, this collection represents the *Carne Vale* or *Farewell to the Flesh*.

Like everything else in world culture, politics weaves its way into the music, but even overt social commentaries and anti-government raging is carefully hidden in a soundtrack of exuberance and partying.

Hell, there's even a soccer tune thrown into the Afro Latin mix.

This is indeed a festive collection of Carnival songs from all corners of the world. The Putumayo people continue to pull together these compilations and stick to their motto "guaranteed to make you feel good"

– By Jay Knutson

Garmarna

Hildegard von Bingen

Northside Records
NSD0603

Garmarna is inspired by music of the medieval period, be it their usual repertoire of Swedish folk, or in this case, the music of 12th century nun Hildegard von Bingen.

They've been favourably compared to Enigma. Hmm, I don't know about that. This discs seems to fluctuate between average and boring in terms of being demanding and interesting through a mix of sequenced drum machines, electric bass alongside hurdy gurdy, guitars and fiddles.

Many of us, I think have a soft spot for certain record labels; Northside is one. I was hoping for greatness. Was I disappointed

ed? Oh dear, oh dear.

On the positive side, this is an enhanced CD, which includes a beautiful live performance video. There are also links to sites on the web, including that of their American label and their very impressive-own, very impressive.

– By Dave McQueen

The Holy Modal Rounders

I Make a Wish For a Potato

Rounder Heritage Series
1166-11598-2

A long time ago when the folk music world was simpler and less crowded and everything was new, The Holy Modal Rounders were refreshing and wacky. Well it's 2001, and it really was a long time ago. As an artifact and for the memories it's a wonderful collection of digitally remastered songs and it may replace the Holy Modal Rounder albums you have stashed in the basement.

And for for musicology and pop culture historians, listen to what the old guys did way back when. It's charming; it's pleasant. I'm glad Rounder has the money to preserve these things. It's great that it exists digitally but as an essential recording, probably not. Take it for what it is: a lovely bit of preservation of the past. Like dessert it's not a necessity to a good meal but welcome when it comes.

– By Les Siemieniuk

Gavin O'Lochlen & Cotter's Bequest

My Mother's Country

Loecian Records
BFS CD 9806

Gavin O'Lochlen was born in Australia but the mother countries have a fair pull on him, spiritually and musically. *My Mother's Country* is wonderful work celebrating of the Celtic areas of Great Britain and exploring the ancient monuments of Cornwall, Wales, Scotland, England and The Isle of Man. Each piece is about one of 10 places including Hadrian's Wall, Mont St. Michel, Silbury Hill, and, of course, Stonehenge.

The pieces all written by Gavin are performed with the six members of Cotter's Bequest and other guest musicians. Sung in English, Cornish, Manx and Welsh, they are spiritual and haunting. With beautiful arrangements and featuring 23 instruments ranging from the guitar (acoustic and Electric) to the space-age vocoder and including pipes of all sorts, drums of all sorts, and harps, the pieces, flow together like a fine Scotch malt. They're superbly conceived and played. This album is a treat. It's entertaining; it's contemporary, it's timeless. I want to hear more!

– By Les Siemieniuk

Recordings

Various Artists

Scots Women Live from Celtic Connections 2001

GreenOxtrax Recordings 2001
CDTRAX213D

The Scots Women project is the result of a gathering together of many of Scotland's finest female singers. Members of this surprisingly diverse group work together to produce gorgeously harmonious interpretations of Scottish songs.

Eighteen different female voices contributed to this recording, ranging from relative youngster Karine Polwart (Malinky and Battlefield Band) to some of the long-established Scottish divas such as Alison McMorland and Sheena Wellington. New renditions of oft-sung Scottish tunes, such as *Annachie Gordon* and *A Wee Bird Cam Tae My Apron* will evoke a range of emotions as they are delivered with passion, conviction, and beauty.

Produced and directed by Scottish fiddler and musical genius, Brian McNeill (now, by the way, an honorary Texan), this double CD was recorded live at the Celtic Connections Festival, Glasgow in January 2001. Against a backdrop of stellar instrumentalists including Andy Thorburn (keyboards), Mike Travis (percussion), Duncan MacGillivray (pipes), and McNeill himself on various stringed instruments, the shining stars of the albums are the women's voices both individually and in glorious choral arrangement. This is a must for anyone who loves the female voice and the traditional Scottish song.

— By Jackie Bell

E2K

Shift

Topic Records
TSCD522

E2K is the latest incarnation of an English roots band that started out as Edward II and the Red Hot Polkas (named after the painful death of the English monarch who was reputed to be gay, and therefore inclined to like that sort of thing, according to his executioners!) That band was led by Rod Stradling on melodeon and played English dance music spiced up with a reggae beat. This unusual musical marriage worked so well that the band morphed into a full-blown reggae band called Edward II, with a new box player — Rees Wesson — a hot horn section, known as Metal Fatigue, and several West Indian immigrants and English born rastas. *Wicked Men* was a killer album released in 1991. Their future seemed bright. But it was five years before the next CD — *Zest*, with another box player, Simon Care, and a slightly smaller combo still blending reggae classics with their own songs and English dance tunes.

That was the last I heard of them until Shift. And Edward II have certainly shifted. They are now on Topic Records, and the reggae boys have left the band. Founding



E 2 K

guitarist Jon Moore is still there, with his African-influenced chops even more prominent. Simon Care adds his considerable talents on melodeon again, and the new singer is Kellie While (ex Albion Band), daughter of Chris While (ex Albion Band) — what a tight little family unit surrounds the Albion Band and Ashley Hutchings and co.!

Neil Yates of Metal Fatigue is back and the rhythm section now comprises Robert Fordjour on drums and Kwame Yeboah on keyboards and bass. Kellie While's breathy vocals render the latest Albion Band CD a little insipid for me, although perhaps it's their music, because with E2K I find her vocals ideally suited to the Afro / R&B groove of these songs.

There are traditional numbers like *The Water Is Wide*, *The Farmer's Cursed Wife*, *Fair & Tender Ladies* and songs with a strong whiff of tradition about them, notably *Love For A Season* (to the tune of *Glenlogie*).

The sole instrumental set is a very bouncy highlife melting pot of Irish tunes *Blackthorn Stick* and *Rakes of Kildare*, and the Afro beat of *Cursed Wife* is equally compelling. Yates' musical arrangements and Moore's guitar work are outstanding throughout.

This CD has been a tough one for me to review, 'cos it's been nagging away at my subconscious for weeks. It has definitely won the battle, though, and the songs and While's voice, propelled by that delightful beat and those spritely arrangements, make this one of my favourite CDs of the year.

Indeed, the closing cut, *Take Me Home*, co-written by Yeboah and While, hints at a potent Afro-English sound which could lead to some very exciting developments.

— By Steve Edge

Triakel

Wintersong

NorthSide
NSD 6061

Wintersong is Triakel's second recording and is, of all things, a Christmas album. While Triakel's eponymous first CD was a dark, foreboding experience, exploring songs of sorrow and loss, this current disc finds them in a celebratory mood — joyful in fact. It also showcases the trio's musical and lyrical versatility by building a festive album on a foundation of traditional Swedish hymns, prayers, and drinking songs.

Christmas in the Mining Region contrasts the black dust of a coal mine with white, dancing snowflakes, *Christmas Carol from Alvdalen* is a lovely hymn and *The Christmas Tree Polska* is one of several bright, festive dances on the disc. Triakel consulted experts on traditional Swedish music and drew from diverse sources for this album. Their hard work has paid off, *Wintersong* celebrates the Christmas season with a rich variety of joyful music.

An added bonus is the excellent CD packaging and liner notes; a series of photographs of Swedish winter landscapes, translated lyrics and an explanation of the origin of each song. One would think that Christmas albums are something that has been done, excuse the expression, to death. But a Christmas album that comes with song writing and accordion credits attributed to a former member of ABBA ought to come with side order of insulin. Yet Triakel have proven my suspicion and cynicism wrong, the music that they have created in *Wintersong* shows that there are still seasonal albums worth doing. While

Recordings

it's an acquired but rewarding taste, it leaves you wondering where this trio will end up next.

— By Paul Childs

Robbie Fulks Couples In Trouble

Boondoggie Records
RD 02

Couples In Trouble is the most accomplished Robbie Fulks production to date. While earlier recordings fell into the alternate country/rock category, the new disc covers a wider palette, spreading out in several directions, while still being encompassed by the generic term Americana. From the New Orleans influenced horns of *Brenda's New Stepfather* to the intricate clip-clopping horse and buggy percussion of *Anything For Love*, to the pure power pop of *Mad At A Girl*, Fulks takes in all influences and mixes them down into something that, while it's both new and old, rocking and countrified, is fresh and completely American. His song-writing, as always, is brilliant — clever, humorous, hard-edged, moving, and frightening all at the same time. With songs the caliber of *Real Money* and *The Banks of the Marianne*, this could be a landmark disc except Fulks just keeps getting better. He's one of the most inventive singer/songwriter/guitarists in music today. Buy this disc.

— By Barry Hammond

Andy Hill and Renée Safier It Takes A Lot To Laugh

Hillstruck Music

A tribute to Bob Dylan on his 60th birthday, this disc has a lot going for it. First, there's all the Bob Dylan songs, ranging from 1963 to 1985. There's some standards like *Just Like A Woman* and *You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go*, and some lesser played gems such as *When The Ship Comes In*, *One More Cup of Coffee* and *Shooting Star*.

The second major strength of the disc is the sparse arrangements, which let the rock-hard structures of these tunes shine through. Using only acoustic guitar, piano, and tasteful dashes of keyboards, plus co-producer Marty Rifkin's bass, dobro, pedal steel, lap steel, acoustic and electric slide and Safier's hint of percussion, these tracks are pared down to the classic bones.

The third major asset is the soulful voices and terrific harmonies of this Torrance, California duo. Andy Hill and Renée Safier sing beautifully, both individually and together. A must-have disc for any Dylan collector or any fan of folk singing duos for that matter.

— By Barry Hammond



David Gogo

The Nyckelharpa Orchestra

Byss-Calle

NSD6051
NorthSide Records

Reminiscent of lively Celtic reels, captivating and rousing, uplifting and joyous; here's one to celebrate love and life.

The nyckelharpa (keyed fiddle) is Sweden's national instrument. It's more than 600 years old and the name is derived from "nyckel" meaning key and "harpa", loosely translated, stringed instrument.

The title of this recording — *Byss-Calle* is named after the instrument's most legendary player; a man who lived from 1783-1847 and whose talents were so great that they were widely believed to be supernatural. The modern chromatic nyckelharpa has 16 strings: three melody strings, one drone string, and 12 sympathetic vibration (or resonance) strings. It has about 37 wooden keys arranged to slide under the strings.

This sextet, of Sweden's best players, have such a range and virtuosity; their finesse, and solid musical craftsmanship could legitimately place them in a western orchestra. Assuming, of course that they didn't mind playing Swedish polkas and waltzes.

— By Dave McQueen

David Gogo Halfway to Memphis

Cordova Bay Records
CBR 0232

David Gogo is an engaging and spirited live performer and these qualities certainly translate well on this album recorded in

Nanaimo, B.C. He's not afraid to plug his guitar into a stomp box, turn up the volume and let it roar. He's also a competent singer, though you definitely get the feeling that guitar is his first love. If there's one, glaring problem with this CD though, it is the material. He tries to disguise the fact that he's drawn heavily from old, old blues standards by crediting one song to McKinley Morganfield and another to the one-and-the-same Muddy Waters. This may be a joke for blues fans, but do we really need another version of Howlin' Wolf's *Smokestack Lightning*, Willie Dixon's *Wang Dang Doodle* or Hooker's *Boom Boom*. And as original as the song may once have been, Water's *Rollin'* and *Tumblin'* deserves some time off for good behavior after the number of times it's been recorded in recent years.

However, all is not lost on this album by any means. Gogo wrote three of the tunes including *Halfway to Memphis*, which shows he is capable of the very difficult task of writing a blues tune without sounding like an 80-year-old from Chicago. He also does a commendable job on the Willie Nelson classic *Nightlife* and that's not easy, considering the other artists who have already made this song their own.

— By Jeff Holubitsky

Jimmy Vaughan Do You Get The Blues?

Artemis Records
EK 91559

With his spare, understated guitar work and new-found vocal confidence, Jimmy Vaughan has taken a major step as a blues band leader with this album. In fact, it's

Recordings

becoming tough to remember him purely as a guitar hero with the rockin' Fabulous Thunderbirds. He didn't really start singing until after his little brother Stevie Ray's death a decade ago. Since then, he's progressed from a somewhat forced vocal style, to become relaxed, friendly and convincing. Even his guitar work has become more accessible. He's kept his solos down to a few notes, plucked with bare fingers and it works like magic. A couple of licks and there's no doubt who is playing. He's nailed a personal sound and there's very few blues guitarists who can say that.

This album is also great listening for a couple of other reasons. The first is the sheer quality of the players, primarily George Rains on drums and Bill Willis on the Hammond B-3. They know when to play hard, but more importantly, when to lay back to give the other guy a chance, all seemingly within a few beats. Also expect to hear some outstanding guest artists such as Double Trouble and Lou Ann Barton on Vaughan's remake of *In The Middle Of The Night*.

With this CD, Vaughan also takes the blues downtown with its refined, crisp rhythms and instrumentation. When was the last time you heard a flute in a blues tune? Well, it certainly works to refresh a somewhat tired genre, as does his jazzy, acoustic guitar picking in a couple of songs. Let's hope Vaughan brings this band to the northern Prairies some day soon. If their recordings are this good, you can just imagine how the musicians will stretch out in a live setting.

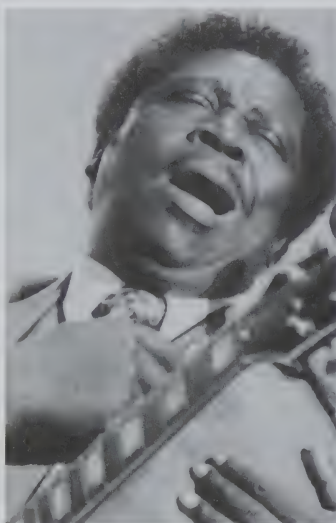
— By Jeff Holubitsky

Hoven Drogen Hippa

NorthSide
NSD6062

I am pleased to report that the much-heralded "kinder, gentler" Hoven Drogen is also a more engaging band on this, their fourth release (their third North American release). In cutting back on the hard rock bombast, the Swedish five-piece demonstrates a more diverse sonic palette, at times reminiscent of Sonic Youth, at others Pierre Dorge's New Jungle Orchestra, and yet at others even the carnivalesque moments of the Schal Sick Brass Band, sometimes in the space of the same tune! And of course, the whole undertaking is firmly grounded in the traditions of Scandinavian folk music, although many of the tunes are original. Some of the highlights include the impossibly anthemic *Syen*, the supple snakecharmer melody and industrial club thump of *Malort*, and the metallic whine and electrical insect buzz of *Guadrin's Waltz*. Throw in a few really stripped down, acoustic tunes and you have a real winner. No songs this time around, but you will find yourself singing along anyway, I guarantee!

— By Richard Thornley



B.B. KING

Scott Miller & The Commonwealth Thus Always To Tyrants

Sugar Hill
SUG-CD-1066

On his debut solo recording, former V-Roy Scott Miller embraces his influences while creating the type of music John Mellencamp might have had had he not taken the path of stadium stardom.

Miller has a powerful voice, one replete with folks gruff sincerity, that brings to mind a range of singers — Lou Reed, Warren Zevon, and even Moe Berg. While not normally a trait one appreciates in emerging vocalists, it works for Miller; his earnestness and timbre of sound ring true to his vision of modern country rock — The Faces and The Who meet The Band and Tom Petty in the Shenandoah Valley.

Tim O'Brien and Dirk Powell contribute fiddle and banjo to *Dear Sarah*, a song of another land and time, of war and devotion, that incorporates *Barbara Allen* into a story of Miller's forefathers.

With *Highland County Boy* Miller attempts, quite successfully, to out-Steve Earle on a tale of a youngest son left on the farm during the Civil War — "the spark of plow to rock is now the only fight I've known."

While these tracks are acoustically befitting another time, the majority of *Thus Always To Tyrants* — songs of family, rebellion, and longing — are hewn to a rock n' roll edge sharp enough to inspire self reflection; Miller doesn't hesitate to turn the back of reflection upon himself.

And, with that, Miller distinguishes himself from the singer songwriter pack.

— By Donald Teplyske

Bill Jones Panchpuran

Brick Wall Music
Brick 002CD

Well there's Eliza, Kate, and now Bill is the latest young interpreter of traditional English song. BBC Folk Awards Best Newcomer Bill Jones' second effort, *Panchpuran*, at first listen is deceptively understated. Give it a second listen and you are struck by how well-crafted it is. By the third listen the depth of the arrangements, choice of material, and Jones' pure vocals will have won you over completely. Produced by Karen Tweed, the disk is well balanced between simple (but not austere) arrangements for voice and piano with the odd flute or string quartet thrown in for good measure, and far more elaborate affairs. *Panchpuran* features harmony vocals from Jacey Bedford (Artisan) and Coope, Boyes and Simpson, amongst others, Kathryn Tickell on fiddle, and some jazz-like flourishes. The songs themselves are stylistically diverse. *The Tunney Song* Set deftly links three songs together in the manner of a set of fiddle tunes, *Rocking the Cradle* has a decidedly un-English swing, and *The Blackleg Miner* with its jaunty colliery-style brass ensemble evokes a rather mournful parade. Quirky, gentle, and all in all, a lovely effort.

— By Sandy Stiff

B.B. KING Live in Japan

MCA
MCD-111 810-2

Proust is a miserable read, if recollections of my experience at uni are any criteria, but he did hit upon a grand image in *Remembrance Of Things Past*. We all have our "madeleins" in life, and this CD is one such memory starter for me, part of my life's soundtrack.

Begun in 1964, my relationship with B.B. still continues, albeit very much at continental distances these days. I last got together with him about four years ago in Sydney. This CD contains concert recordings of King and his road band from Tokyo in early 1971. At this point in his career, B.B. had just exploded out of following the chitlin' circuit and onto White radio with his major hit, *The Thrill is Gone* in 1970. No longer would his biggest venues be the Apollo or Howard Theatres — his audience was beginning to broaden (and whiten) into its present-day international scope.

The album in question here is well over an hour of vital and representative music by a musician who still felt he had much to prove, and whose performance sets out to do just that.

This album is, in a sense, a typical gig, one like many that I heard in those years (1964-1974). B.B.'s seven-piece band roars and simmers right along with him in the collection of past and (then) present-day hits (*Every Day I Have the Blues*, *How*

Recordings

Blue Can You Get, Sweet Sixteen. The Thrill is Gone), as well as lesser-known parts of his repertoire (*Eyesight to the Blind, You're Still My Woman, Hummingbird, Darlin', You Know I Love You, Chains & Things*), plus for long instrumentals that allow his band, Sonny Freeman & the Unusals, to be really heard. It's great to be able to hear these guys again. B.B. was one to hire good musos and to give them some spaces during performance, so that they are all heard here... and, of course, so is Lucille!

If one is unsure of why the man has such a great reputation as a guitarist, this is a good place to find out that that rep' is truly well-deserved (and then some).

Recent studio recordings with B.B., a couple with his present road band, as well as his Louis Jordan salute, show that he still has "it": this album, never previously released outside of Japan, shows that "it" has a long career!

Don't let this fall between the cracks because it's not truly "new", for it's one of the best things that B.B. has ever released over his long career and it deserves a place in any respectable record collection alongside *Live at Regal*.

— By Peter B. Lowry



Wyckham Porteous

major proportions. That notoriety has unfortunately obscured his major role in the development of Blues, R'n'B, and by extension, Rock & Roll itself, his importance being covered over by the dust kicked up by Ike's former nasty habits. Remember, Mr. Turner was a piano prodigy who later went on to produce folks in the '50s like Elmore James, B.B. King, Howlin' Wolf, Little Milton... the list goes on and on... years before Annie Mae Bullock caught his eye (and later, his fist). The original Kings of Rhythm and Rocket 88 were part of a musical revolution, while Ike & Tina led to his apogee in R'n'B, Soul, and Pop, and also gave rise to the seeds of his downfall. All that is behind the man, now, and this album is his last declaration of health.

Egotistically released on the Ikon label, the CD is a complete delight that exceeds all expectations in this house! It's great Blues/R'n'B record – good songs, great piano and guitar (with plenty of whammy bar), coupled with Ike's more than serviceable singing reminds me a lot of Percy Mayfield. As is to be expected of a new production, the album involves many players and studios. The only guest stars are one-time Kings of Rhythm pianist Ernest Lane, and Ike's former protégé, Little Milton Campbell. Ike Turner has gone back to his roots in a positive way and has created a CD that is not lame or clichéd. There is little in the racks today that will stack up against this one. Distributed by the folks at Rooster Blues/Bottled Magic in the US, let's hope that this release signifies the return of Ike Turner to the real blues world. Here And Now will likely slot into my Top 10 for 2001, and you folks should give it a try.

— By Peter B. Lowry

Wyckham Porteous sexanddrinking

Cordova Bay
CBR-0242

sexanddrinking, apparently, is a travelogue of sexual adventure. Well, there's nothing wrong with a bit of the old in-out, squirrel. Pass my trench coat.

Porteous has always been one of Victoria's darker secrets, never fully achieving the recognition his recordings so fully deserve. *sexanddrinking* might possibly do the trick. Coming across like a combination of Robert Earl Keen Jr. and Joe Ely the day he opened for The Clash, Porteous tumbles his way through the fine burghs of Europe and North America on the coat-tails of the most rewardingly aggressive music he has ever made. My lord, the Oysterband would order another round of tattoos for a whiff of *Mighty Drinkers*. *Feel Alright* and *The First Time* are equally impressive. If *I've Been Around* sits too close to George Thorogood, the title track will get right up your nose with its funky, Joe's *Garage*-era, Zappa-like spoken delivery. And *Better Than Ever* owes too much of its soul to The Troggs to be taken seriously.

Yeah, but the beautiful *Ophelia*, the heavenly *Amsterdam*, and the simple plainness of *Fall So Deep* more than compensate. So it's not all a bluster and barnstorming that propels this quite exquisite disc. Whatever, under the stiffest sheets, it's still the first major Canadian roots-rock recording of the new millennium. Buy it now.

— By Roddy Campbell

La Bottine Souriante Cordial

Mille-Pattes
67527 02042 2 1

It's been 25 years and eleven albums. And this time out, the boys are mixing it up just a bit more. They have expanded the percussion section, thrown in some funk, some reggae, and some pan-Arabic rhythms, and even dabbled in doo-wop. But the basic ingredients found in their previous release, *Xieme*, are all still here: dynamic, explosive tunes, similarly upbeat songs (often with rather bawdy themes), and of course, that brilliant brass section and Michel Bordeleau's feet! La Bottine are a dynamic band live and their sound translates amazingly well to studio recordings. They have been labeled by some as the "best band in the world" and that may not be overstatement. One small quibble – the final track, *Et Boucle La Bottine*, is a collection of looped song extracts from the rest of the CD. It is a strangely gimmicky inclusion, not quite what you would expect from this band. Overall though, a raucous, rollicking romp through the best of Quebecois traditional music. Just try sitting still!

— By Sandy Stiff & Richard Thornley

Ike Turner & The Kings of Rhythm

Here and Now

Ikon
8850

OK, boys and girls, I know that Ike Turner is best known to the world-at-large for being a substance and spousal abuser of

Recordings



Aengus Finnan

Gaelic Storm Tree Higher

Tree Higher Octave Music
OMCD 10247

Gaelic Storm are the band from the Steerage scene in the movie *Titanic*. That's what made them famous for 15 minutes and their time is now up.

This album, produced by Jim Cregan of Rod Stewart fame, is dreadful. It is the sort of watered down "Celtic" music that Hollywood imagines we want to hear. It's like the Corrs without the hits and good looks.

Over-polished and generally lacking merit. Should have gone down with the boat.

— By Tim Readman

Krishna Das Breath Of The Heart

Razor and Tie
7930185201-2

Not since George Harrison's, huge, slightly plagiarized hit, *Hari Krishna*, have we had a truly popular spiritual East meets West musical offering.

Krishna Das wanted to be a rock 'n' roller but after going to a Jimi Hendrix concert and missing the backstage 'experience' sought spiritual enlightenment in the East, and like many of the '70s caftan clad army found his way to the foothills of the Himalayas. There, under the tutelage of the Maharaj-ji, he learnt how to chant and embrace Buddhism as a way of life.

On this his first CD he has accumulated an amazingly talented array of musicians and offers an upbeat very listen able collection of his own songs and arrangements.

For those of you who walked in the wheat fields of Elysium with Russell Crowe in *Gladiator* and were chilled by the hauntingly beautiful music of Hans Zimmer you will find the same kind of quality in the opening, *Baba Hanuman*, a stunning, 14-minute workout for the old neck hairs. Krishna Das's voice is brilliant and when artfully interwoven with violin, flutes, guitar and a variety of other strings and percussion it's magic.

The rest of the CD is just as strong and with rich background vocals supplied by Kosmic Kirtan Posse we are lead on a joyful journey that truly is food for the soul.

— By Annemarie Hamilton

Various Artists

Roots Music: An American Journey

Rounder Records
11661-0501-2

Rounder Records, the great Massachusetts-based label that has been a treasure trove of American roots music since 1971, has culled the best of its archives for this four-CD box set that offers a panoply of North American styles, richly annotated in a 45-plus page booklet of liner notes. Something for everyone spills out of this musical cornucopia — bluegrass, blues, zydeco, folk, cajun, R&B, cowboy — ranging from old warhorses like Dylan to contemporary artists like Alison Krauss. For newcomers to American roots music, this is the mother lode. For those already familiar with the scene, there is so much diversity here that would have been a near impossibility to have heard it all before. Normally, people become infected by one genre. Here are all the colors of the rainbow. Although primarily American, there are Canadian entries, too, from the Cash Brothers and Natalie MacMaster. Some less-heard American artists, like Slaid Cleaves and Tish Hinojosa, are unearthed.

This is a truly regional collection, with music from all corners of North America. Rounder has also left out most of "the scratchy stuff" and given us high quality recordings of some truly great artists.

— By Bob Remington

Various Artists

O' Sister: The Women's Bluegrass Collection

Rounder Records
1161-0490-2

Although Bill Monroe once had a woman in his Bluegrass Boys (accordionist Sally Ann Forrester in 1943), bluegrass has traditionally been a male-dominated affair. Pioneers like Hazel Dickens have always made their mark, but it's only been in the last two decades that women have come onto the scene in mixed-gender bands like *The Good Ol' Persons*. Today, some of the best in the genre are women: Claire Lynch, Rhonda Vincent, Alison Krauss, Lynn Morris, Laurie Lewis, the Stevens Sisters

and Ginny Hawker. This collection of previously released material will be familiar to bluegrass nuts, but serves as a wonderful introduction to neophytes of female artists. All the aforementioned are here, along with the Cox Family, Kathy Kallick, Wilma Lee Cooper, Alice Gerrard, Delia Bell, Phyllis Boynes and Carol Elizabeth Jones. Gender aside, this is simply an absolutely fine collection of great bluegrass.

— By Bob Remington

Ginny Hawker

Letters From My Father

Rounder
82161-0491-2

Rarely heard except among diehard bluegrassers, Ginny Hawker finally gets a long overdue debut CD in her own name. Produced by Dirk Powell, one of the young saviours of "old-time" music, Hawker is ably assisted by Tim O'Brien and Darrell Scott with some notably outstanding fiddle by Ron Stewart. Hawker has a razor-sharp voice that drips with pure emotion. The material ranges from country to old-time to bluegrass, capturing the soul of them all. Although she's been around for years, Hawker should get "rising star" attention with this album. Highly recommended.

— By Bob Remington

Aengus Finnan

Fool's Gold

Festival

Aengus Finnan — a young man with an ear and a voice for Canada — is a storyteller. Many of his songs originated in and are sung to people in remote outposts. *The Ballad of Marguerite de la Roche* tells of a young woman abandoned with her lover on their way to New France in 1543. *The War Bride's Waltz* is a story learned from a house in Riverdale. He sings, "The love she gave was enough to have saved an entire legion of men". His "darkest years" as a teacher are dealt with in *Fly Away*. This folksinger, compared to Gordon Lightfoot, allows the Canadian landscape to give him perspective. In *Lately*, he wishes he "was a breeze in summer, I'd wrap around you, I'd dance in your hair." In *Fool's Gold*: "And old folks say 'there's a cruel winter comin' / They can tell by the way the geese fly.'"

Fool's Gold also contains traditional material. *Black is the Colour*; *The Blackleg Miner* and *Wayfaring Stranger* all are sung with new meaning. Finnan accompanies himself on guitar and is joined by flute, bass, banjo, accordion, drum and Irish flute. If you like a rare sensitivity and freshness, go panning for this one!

— By Patricia Pavey

Recordings

Susheela Raman Salt Rain

Narada World
74238-50955-2-8

Salt Rain, the debut recording by Susheela Raman on the Narada generated considerable critical and commercial interest on its release in the UK. Its tracks are a musical and emotional exploration merging of western rock/pop influences with the music of Raman's familial home; Tamil south India. A common structure in the music is a rhythm section laying down a standard 4/4 or blues beat with an overlay of Indian string and percussion instruments.

Blending these with more traditional western formats allows the music to drop into more 'exotic' passages without sounding contrived. Raman's vocals also move effortlessly between Indian/Tamil voicings to western styling.

Salt Rain is not just a clever ramming together western and token Indian instruments; there is a deep understanding of the music and insight into the common musical roots of different cultures at work here. Lyrically it's an interesting fusion as well; citing Annie Lennox and Hindustani vocalists as significant influences Raman sings alternately in English and Tamil.

The songs reflect her concern with the place of women in society. The lyrics of songs such as Woman, Kamakshi, and the title track address issues of dignity and spirituality in the lives of women.

Many of the other tracks deal with spirituality as an integral part of everyday life and in the creative process, most are gems of insight and brevity. Citing Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan Raman refers to Salt Rain as the

shedding of tears as catharsis and release through music, and as a journey across oceans to new worlds. Judging by the textures and complexities of this initial excursion this will be a journey worth taking.

- By Paul Childs

Eileen Rose Shine Like It Does

Compass/Rough Trade Records
3306

Great reviews in Mojo and Q magazine notwithstanding, my first impression as the wash of guitar sound kicks off this CD is of another Lucinda Williams copyist. There's more to it than that though. Eileen Rose grew up in a poor North Boston suburb, the youngest of 10 kids. This material is autobiographic tracing her path out of Boston via Massachusetts to London, England.

Her self-penned songs of love, loss, self doubt, missed family and booze hit a raw nerve and then won me over. She delivers the music with spirit and attitude aplenty. Her voice goes all the way from fragile and vulnerable to powerful and aggressive; the transition sometimes occurring in an instant. The sound is mainly derived from country and rock influences featuring tasteful guitar and organ and a solid uncomplicated backbeat. She has some great lines such as, "Never say anything drunk that you didn't think about when you were sober" (*Booze Talkin'*) and "I shot for heaven and came in low, if I'm forgiven it doesn't show" (*Party Dress*).

First impressions aren't lasting ones in this case. This one's really starting to grow on me. Worth a listen.

- By Tim Readman

Nanci Griffith Clock Without Hands

WEA CD
62660

The first album of Griffith's original material since 1997, *Clock Without Hands* was worth the wait. The central theme is one of the potential re-awakening of the dulled heart and the broken spirit into a wiser, refreshed soul.

Griffith's recent experience working with the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation and anti-landmine groups, are reflected in the compassionate writing and delivery of *Travelling Through this Part of You*. She relays the emotional experiences of a Vietnam vet, those close to him and also the pain his generation.

"You were an American boy Whose innocence was here in the war And I wear your scars While traveling through this part of you."

Griffith's voice is alternately strong, raw, soft and expressive, making each song a stand-alone treat. Yet, the album itself is a coherent whole reflecting the talents of a thoughtful, mature, and sometimes irreverent writer and performer.

Backed up by the Blue moon Orchestra, the album is instrumentally strong. Listen for some tasty guitar courtesy Clive Gregson and sensitive harmony vocals by Linda Ronstadt.

Griffith's fans won't be disappointed by *Clock Without Hands*.

- By Jackie Bell

Dudley Connell and Don Rigsby

Another Saturday Night

Sugar Hill

Despite, or perhaps because of, the lack of high, lonesome bite in their vocals, Dudley Connell and Don Rigsby have long been highly regarded within the bluegrass community. These precision vocalists embrace natural folk and country influences over hollergrass affections. Whether singing with the Johnson Mountain Boys, the Seldom Scene, Longview, or the Lonesome River Band, Connell and Rigsby have long been in the upper echelon of contemporary bluegrass singers.

It comes as no surprise that this album features duet and harmony singing which brings to mind, on numbers as varied as *Hollis Brown* and *Too Late*, great brother duos such as the Everlys and the Stanleys. The highlight maybe *You May Sing Of The Beauties* where Rigsby and Connell's voices ebb over and through each other's with uncommon dexterity.

The vocal arrangements most accurately recall the balladry displayed on albums such as the Louvin Brothers' *Tragic Songs of Life*. Tight bluegrass instrumental backing showcases the vocalists. Tim O'Brien's fiddle is prominently featured alongside Rigsby's mandolin. Current IBMA Bass Player of the Year Missy Raines's playing is crisp and subtle. While neither entirely country nor bluegrass, *Another Saturday Night* contains sufficient qualities and quantities of both to satisfy those who appreciate vocal excellence.

- By Donald Teplyske



Nanci Griffith

Books



Photo: Edmonton Folk Music Festival Joni Mitchell

Shadows & Light

Joni Mitchell, The Definitive

Biography

By Karen O'Brien

ISBN: 1-85227-976-1

Virgin books / 344 pages / \$34.95

Karen O'Brien, a music journalist and bbc world service radio news producer, author of hymn to her, a collection of writings on women musicians, has chosen Joni Mitchell as the subject for her first full length "definitive," biography. While it probably won't be the definitive book on Mitchell—she's apparently working on her autobiography and there may be others down the road, which could have even more access to letters, papers, and so on—this is as good as we're likely to get right now.

O'Brien realizes the limitations of the biography. In her introduction she quotes both Roland Barthes, who called biography, "the novel that dare not speak its name," and Janet Malcolm, who relates how biographies are dressed up in scholarship so the reader "believes he is having an elevating literary experience, rather than simply listening to backstairs gossip and reading other people's mail." Having said that, she steers clear of the sensationalism many biographies of the music industry revel in. This is a serious, straightforward account of Mitchell's life, music, art and photography. While it's not an "official" biography, O'Brien has had access to and interviewed many of the key friends and colleagues in Mitchell's life. She's also aware this sort of book on Mitchell is long overdue and talks about the "industry," of books that have grown up around figures like Bob Dylan, or the Beatles, while ignoring Mitchell, who has been equally influential. The book covers the major events of Mitchell's life, from her birth in Fort MacLeod, Saskatchewan, through her art student days in Calgary, to her coffee house apprenticeship in Toronto, and into the United States, where the mak-

ing of the superstar began. We follow her career ups and downs, triumphs and setbacks, and the not-always-smooth path of her personal life, including frank details relating to recent revelations about the child she gave up for adoption, the mother and daughter reunion, right up until the accolades of the past few years. She points out, quite rightly, that Joni Mitchell is one of the few major artists of the twentieth century who, while being a brilliant singer/songwriter/guitarist/composer, also controlled her own publishing, never had an outside producer on her records, had final say on her album cover art, and was a pioneer in fusing elements of jazz and world music into her own take on folk, rock 'n roll, and pop. One of the more interesting sections in the book deals with the idea of the self-portrait, which although it is common in art, seems especially relevant to the expression of women artists, what that could signify, and how it relates to Joni Mitchell. Another high point is the section dealing with Mitchell's brief encounters and correspondence with the artist Georgia O'Keeffe, and the parallels between their lives and art. This is a solid biography, which should please fans and casual readers alike, though hardcore fans may recognize some of the interview sources, if they've collected items such as the recent much music live and interactive show, the 1998 CBC feature, or the come in from the cold video compilation. Still, highly recommended.

- By Barry Hammond.

Bill Wyman's Blues Odyssey: A Journey To Music's Heart & Soul

by Bill Wyman With Richard Havers

dk publishing, \$49.95, 301 pages

Hard to believe the Lone stone has enough time on his hands to be involved in the writing of this excellent chronicle of the blues. But he's clearly a driven spirit. Remember that Wyman was the first stone to go solo and the recent re-release of his first three albums (The Bill Wyman Compendium) has only added to his impressive list of post-stones accomplishments including the birth of his three daughters, a successful chain of restaurants (Sticky Fingers), a book of his photographs, and a near-feverish recording and touring schedule behind his successful-in-their-own-right Rhythm Kings. The removal of his creative frustrations under the Jagger-Richards regime have obviously granted him a new lease on life. Blues Odyssey is clearly payback time, lovingly written in tribute to the music — and under-appreciated musicians — that first inspired him to pick up a bass guitar. This is no contractual schmooze for easy royalties — Wyman has painstakingly researched his subject matter and mapped out his per-

sonal journey based on his first-hand experience over the years. The result is a library-friendly reference book for the casual blues fan and hardcore fanatic alike. A rich collection of maps, photographs and in-depth text probes the origin of the genre and follows its colourful heritage to the present. Odyssey's accessible, well-organized format lends itself to quick, informative hits or provocative, chapter-by-chapter study. Wyman's stature in the music business afforded him the opportunity to meet and greet many of the originators whose music the stones helped popularize, if not plagiarize. This fact alone, however, lends an authenticity to the project as it underlines Wyman's sincerity and commitment in his attempt to "pay his dues" while repaying those originators who deserved far better than they got.

- By Eric Thom

Where Dead Voices Gather

By Nick Tosches

ISBN: 0-316-80507-5

Little, brown and company / \$34.95

Some of the most interesting books are born of obsession. Where Dead Voices Gather is the result of Nick Tosches over twenty years' possession by the ghost of an obscure black-face minstrel comedian and singer named Ernest Miller. Miller was a white man, born near macon, Georgia in 1903. His own obsession, from the time he was around ten years old, was to become a minstrel singer, those now somewhat disreputable show business figures who flourished from the 1820's into the first half of the nineteenth hundreds and whose influences, Tosches claims, are still being felt today. Like Robert Johnson, another cult figure in music history, much of Miller's career and life is shrouded in mystery. Miller had what was termed "a trick," or "clarinet" voice, an eerie kind of semi-yodel that may have come out of the distant past of minstrel shows and blues and moved, through him, into country music. Tosches sees Miller as the pivotal figure, where old-time minstrelsy, jazz, blues, and country music all came together for a moment before splitting into their various modern incarnations. He makes a good case for it. Jazz musicians the likes of trombonist Tommy Dorsey, clarinetist Jimmy Dorsey, drummer Gene Krupa, and guitarist Eddie Lang played on Miller's recordings for Okeh in the 1920's. Country singers Jimmie Rodgers, Bob Wills and Hank Williams, who also recorded "Lovesick Blues," all cited him as an influence on their vocal style. More recently, Merle Haggard and Leon Redbone have claimed him as forerunner. His recordings of Anytime, St. Louis Blues, I Ain't Got Nobody, and Right or Wrong helped those songs become both blues and country standards. The book is much more than a biography of an obscure musician, however.

Books

Tosches merely uses the mysteries and the facts of miller's life as a jumping off point, a framework. Through a series of excursions, digressions, parentheses and asides, tosches explores many subjects: the idea of race, the history of minstrelsy in general, the backgrounds of many popular songs, the origins of "the blue yodel," and yodeling in general, talking blues, the concept of a "jubilee," cocaine songs, black vocal quartets, the various Slang for female parts, the term "cracker," early black cinema, bob dylan, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Homer's Odyssey, the meaning of being "gay," wop songs, monkey gland cures for impotence, the careers and lives of other performers, who crossed miller's path, wrote the songs

he sang, who influenced him, or were influenced by him in turn, the genesis of popular culture, the tracing of certain poetical lines and themes far back into prehistory, how all this influenced rock and roll and how it is all still going on today. If that sounds like a lot, it is, and there's more besides. It's tosches' credit that his knowledge of all these areas is encyclopedic and that he can bring such diverse concepts together and weave them into a coherent, though poetic narrative. Someone should write a book about him - he's written landmark biographies of Jerry Lee Lewis and Dean Martin, a book on Sonny Liston, a couple of novels, and many articles and essays on music for top maga-

zines, spanning thirty years. He's one of the most interesting American writers going today and anything he says about music and popular culture, in general, is worth reading and thinking seriously about. If you have even the slightest interest in any of the above topics, where dead voices gather, is a great read. Highly recommended. And if, while you're reading the book you want to know what Miller actually sounded like, there's a 1996 CD collection of his recordings on Columbia/Sony legacy (CK 66999) called Emmett Miller - the Minstrel Man from Georgia.

- By Barry Hammond.

Live

Paddy Keenan and Tommy O'Sullivan

Rogue Folk Club, Vancouver
October 14, 2001

Crisp and clear was the night, but cosy the hall for the warm tones of Paddy Keenan, an acknowledged master of the archetypal irish instrument, the Uilleann pipes. Since arriving in the wider public eye just over 25 years ago on the front line of the celebrated Bothy Band he has symbolized both the purity of the tradition as well as the dynamism of contemporary irish music. A stunningly talented musician, he has in fact played a major role in shaping it. With him tonight, tommy O'Sullivan of sliabh notes on a brace of Martin guitars, one tuned d-a-d-g-a-d, and singing a few lovely songs as well. The pair hadn't a single copy of the new album, "The Long Grazing Acre", left for us on the coast, as they had all been bought up by Albertans at gigs in Calgary and Edmonton. They made amends though by featuring much of the newly recorded material in their set. Fresh out of the gate a set of jigs, then *Collier's reel/woman of the house*, the pipes warming up and the lads already hot. Tommy did a grand Version of the *maids of culmore*, and Paddy fairly soared on *Dimmy O'Brien's*, wedded to two other hornpipes. *Johnny's* tune has been evolving over time, and still remains one of the loveliest compositions in recent years. Of the tune for his father, Paddy Says "well obviously if you write something it's going to change as you grow with it. Johnny's tune for example. That's on 'na keen affair.'" That's so different now that I would love to take it and record it again, get a live recording of it. There's so much more feeling, so much depth, so much more, well soul if you like, that's it's a different tune, much nicer. But as it is I will stand by it." Paddy's own pair of jigs, one composed for his brother John, and the *Pavee Jig*, written for a film on the travellers, took us to tommy's impassioned take on blackwa-

terside, featuring a gorgeous solo on the pipes from the Maestro. A set of reels later it's time to join the queue at the bar for a different black water to be sure. The second set began with a lovely pair of tunes, and Paddy introducing the next set of jigs by relating the story of once playing them live on the Radio in Galway and the announcer slightly misquoting the name of "*Condon's Frolics*". Easy to see how you could go wrong there and raise a few eyebrows! Tommy sings a wonderful "*killing the blues*" by Rolly Salley, then it's back to the tradition for *Kitty O'Shea's the Kerry Jig*. Another pair from Paddy, eimhin's and cahir's kitchen set up Tommy's bluesier take on Sandy Denny's stranger to himself. Some jigs and then some reels put a grand punctuation on the evening, and an encore of a ripping set, just the one though, as the pair had a 6 am flight to catch. All left thrilled and satisfied, so lovely was the great playing from a very talented duo.

- By David Ingram

Harvest Jazz & Blues Festival

Fredericton, New Brunswick

When the world seems to be falling apart, it's comforting to know that music can offer temporary relief, if not a cure. Such was the basis for the decision by Harvest Festival organizers to 'go on with the show' just two days after the infamous 09/11. It proved the perfect antidote. downtown Fredericton transformed into a total music venue for 125 shows across 15 venues within five city blocks.

Offering a healthy mixture of local, national and international acts, the minor cancellations simply meant a few bands doubled up to cover off any vacancies which, if you were a fan of the major players, meant you got more of them. Big Daddy G and local heroes Hot Toddy recorded live CDs to tremendous

crowd response. The J-W Jones Band, Paul Reddick and the Sidemen, Mel Brown and his Homewreckers, Glamour Puss, the Carson-Downey Band and Sue Foley each delivered impressive, show-stopping sets.

Surprises came in the form of 15-year-old JP LeBlanc's scorching guitar and the inventively eclectic blues of Isaac & Blewett, both from the area. Artists including New Orleans' "Jumpin'" Johnny Sansone, Montreal's Michael Jerome Browne, Halifax's Joe Murphy and Blou injected the event with an Acadian/Cajun blues quotient that, in this neck of the woods, will add fuel to many a kitchen party for months to come. Smaller venues offered opportunities for more intimate sessions with local heroes including Morgan Davis, John Campbelljohn and Rick Jeffery.

The Festival's crowning glory happened on three different nights in the form of open jams staged in the Farmer's Market. Local talent melding with larger names created some truly spontaneous magic that underlined the wide-ranging definition of the blues as it demonstrated its many possibilities. The 11th edition of the Harvest Jazz & Blues Festival was successful in turning the world, for five days, into a better place.

- By Eric Thom



Photo: Eric Thom

J-W Jones Band

Recordings

Cachiato Lopez

Cachiato

World Circuit

By family reckoning, there are approximately 30 bass players in the Lopez clan including both Cachiato's grandfather and grandmother. His father Orestes and uncle Cachao were the creators and namers of the mambo. Cachiato played in numerous popular Cuban bands as well as the National Symphonic Orchestra of Cuba, and is the only member of the Beuna Vista Social Club to play both on the original and all subsequent recordings resulting from the initial hit.

This album takes us to a destination that didn't exist when we began the trip. Skeletal instrumentation introduces the first track – plucked upright bass, clave, and what's this: a Hammond organ? With the flute's entrance we're back in familiar territory but here comes an electric guitar holding down what should be a piano part. Dub reverb on the string section? This is definitely not traditional son.

The arrangement is spare. The production surrounds each instrument with a huge space serving to delineate the unusual assembly. Maracas shake, bongos ring, but the whole never gels into the dense, interlocking swing typical of Cuban bands. From the very first piece, this album announces its difference.

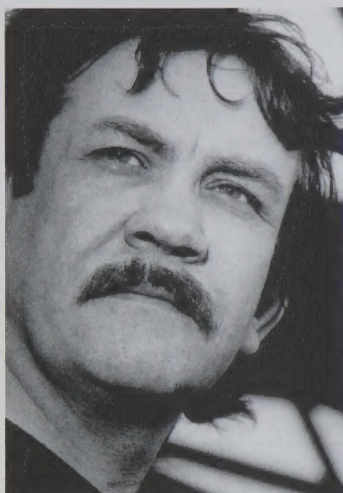
And the music keeps surprising. The hip horns on *Mis Dos Pequeñas* are so ragged, unlike the usual Latino crispness. Dance grooves keep us moving, but the abstractions continue to make their entrances: turntable scratching, rap. . . Now I feel like I've drunk too many mojitos, but I'm having way more fun than I'd thought I would.

I like the transitions from track to track. The staggered entrances of the players help us hear the parts and grasp what a wonky blend is being created. I especially noted the horn lines, charted by Pee Wee Ellis of the James Brown Band – Brown used horns percussively. Here, perhaps for the first time, the hard-edged strings are used percussively.

This disc never stops turning Cuban music upside down. On *Oracion Lucumi*, the tres guitar – an instrument strongly associated with the folk tradition – puts in one of the most abstract and atmospheric performances on the disc. And *Wahira*, (a word not found in the Spanish dictionary) is obviously a combination of *guajira* – peasant woman and the wa-wa effects used on the track.

My only complaint is the lack of information about the musicians. Dozens of players are brought together from many genres. How did this coalition come to be? Not a word on the subject, not even in the scant promotional material sent out on the disc.

Nor does the disc contain any musician's biographies. If your musical tastes make you familiar with the French scratcher DeeNasty, for example, you might not be so



familiar with Miguel Anga Diaz, conguero supremo.

Without a story to grab onto, the average North American shopper is unlikely to gravitate to a CD by an artist with the long and unfamiliar name of Israel Cachiato Lopez. This disc was released six months ago, but if it didn't show up on your radar, I urge you to check it out before it becomes as difficult to find as it is distinctive.

– By Lark Clark

Brian Gladstone

Psychedelic Polk Songs

Back To The Dirt

BTTD002

This is Gladstone's second album – 19 tracks in all. Original songs, cover songs, there are funny songs about Mel Lastman, serious songs about Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz. There are instrumentals too, the best thing on the album. Gladstone's a very good guitar player. But Psychedelic? Maybe he took different drugs than everyone else did. The cover art is psychedelic. It's great. Peter Max lives! But the music – it's all acoustic – where's the psychedelia?

This disc is part serious, part tongue in cheek, so it's hard to condemn and it's hard to praise. In the end, it reminded me of a recorded evening at a coffee house in the 60's – the whole evening – no editing for what worked and what didn't. These days, where it is possible to record in your home studio (like this CD was), sometimes performers miss the boat in editing and focus. It's like showing off a rough diamond rather than a polished one. This could have been a very good record with some judicious cutting.

– By Les Siemieniuk

Dick Gaughan

Outlaws & Dreamers

Applesseed

APR CD 1058

A Different Kind Of Love Song remains the turning point in Dick Gaughan's largely illustrious recording career. Its release in 1983 coincided with the cruelest excesses of Thatcherism. And from that point on, Gaughan focused on political commentary rather than the superb interpretations of mainly traditional Scottish songs and tunes that made his initial reputation.

True, he never recorded at all for almost a decade until *Sail On* in 1996. While the big statements remained, it featured several dubious covers, but also a renewed interest in admirable contemporary Scottish writers. The marginally better, *Redwood Cathedral* followed a similar path two years later as now does *Outlaws & Dreamers*.

Unlike these more recent recordings though, it appears markedly more consistent. A wonderful trio of songs – *The Yew Tree*, *Strong Women Rule Us All* and *John Harrison's Hands* – from Brian MacNeill adds the iron to the soul of this disc. *Dowie Dens o' Yarrow* categorically proves what a magnificent and emotional singer Gaughan is at the top of his game. And at long last he has recorded Si Khan's brilliant *What You Do With What You've Got* – long a staple of his live repertoire.

Still, the delivery of *Tom Joad* sacrifices much for the message. The American inflections that creep into his voice from time to time here are also cause for concern. And surely *Tom Paine's Bones* ought to stand as a celebration rather than be forcefully rammed home at all costs.

For all that, the original title track might be the best thing Gaughan's written since *Both Sides Of The Tweed*. And his tender cover of Phil Ochs's *When I'm Gone* and Kimmie Rhodes's *Wild Roses* are equally as endearing. All in all, *Outlaws & Dreamers* is surely the best Gaughan recording in a long, long time.

By Roddy Campbell

Dust Rhinos

got guinness?

Studio 11 Entertainment

STCD20112

Winnipeg's Dust Rhinos are a good hard working Celtic band who do the standards, write good original songs, and can sing and play their instruments like demons. This, their third release, claims to have successfully bottled the infectious energy of their live shows. No Celtic band has ever successfully done that. It's just better live. Mostly *got guinness?* makes me want to go down to the pub and see them live. And that's a good thing.

– By Les Siemieniuk



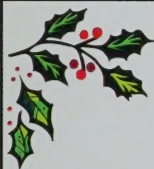
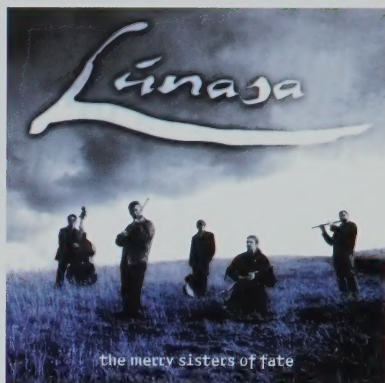
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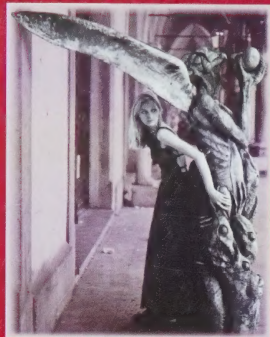
— The Rogue Folk Review

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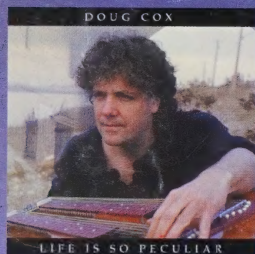
Wyckham Porteous

sexanddrinking



Wyckham Porteous - sexanddrinking

'sexanddrinking' is a departure from Wyckham's previous recordings much in the same way each of previous releases was a departure from the one prior. He still has the poignant lyrics. He still has the voice and the edge. This time he has his band and the music includes ballads, rockers, mood pieces and roots rap.

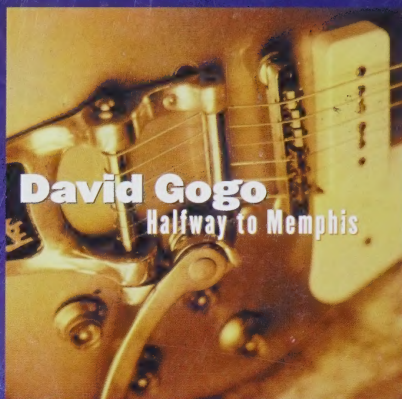
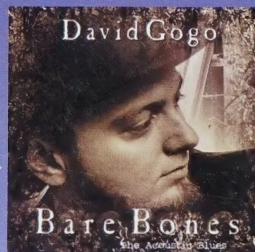


Doug Cox - Life Is So Peculiar

Life Is So Peculiar contains some of Doug's best and most sought after work including a collector's version of the title tune recorded in duet with Amos Garrett.

David Gogo - Bare Bones

Bare Bones pays respect to the traditions and history of the blues. It is a "must have" for any blues record collection. This unplugged recording showcases Gogo's guitar talent in the acoustic vein.



David Gogo - Halfway to Memphis

The release of "**Halfway To Memphis**" brings to blues fans a blazing example of how to do it right. Inspired renditions of Don Van Vliet's "**Click Clack**" and James Brown's "**It's A Man's World**" mix easily with Gogo's own classics "**Halfway To Memphis**" and "**Soul Fever**".

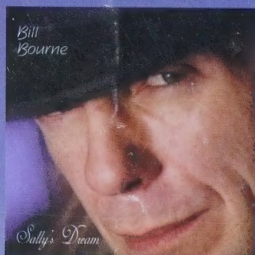
Sonya Marie - One Kiss Closer To Heaven

This is a true 50's style country album that combines the best elements of swing, Cajun, torch ballads and traditional sounds in a fun filled package.



Bill Bourne - Sally's Dream

The ageless bluesman and master folk artist has created the solo album people have been waiting for. A nice alternative to the group sound of Tri-Continental.



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